O Say Can You See … the Soul of Our Nation

O Say Can You See … the Soul of Our Nation was produced by Citizen Joy and Sanchez Art Center in May 2026 to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America.

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Land Acknowledgement

PreNeo Press and these exhibition venues lie on the unceded ancestral homelands of Ohlone peoples. We respectfully acknowledge that the Ohlone are the original inhabitants of what is now the San Francisco Bay Area. Indigenous communities have lived in and moved through this land over hundreds of generations and Indigenous peoples from many nations make their home in this region today. Please join us in recognizing and honoring their ancestors, descendants and all other members of their communities.

You can learn more about the land where you reside at native-land.ca

Front Cover: *Still, the Stars Hold* by Igor Gasowski; Mixed media: watercolor, ink and acrylic; 20" x 16" x 2.125"

Back Cover: *Sacramento Gay Pride Parade* by Susan Giles, Digitally altered photograph on canvas, 40" x 32" x .75"

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O Say Can You See … the Soul of Our Nation

produced by Citizen Joy and Sanchez Art Center

Sanchez Art Center

May 29–June 28, 2026

1220-B Linda Mar Boulevard, Pacifica, California
sanchezartcenter.org

Sanchez Art Center, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, serves through its mission of Creating Community through Art. A warm and welcoming third space located in Pacifica, on the beautiful north San Mateo County coastside, Sanchez Art Center provides the community an ongoing series of free exhibitions by emerging, mid-career and established California and west coast artists, education and engagement designed to make art accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds, and affordable art studios for San Francisco Bay Area artists.

Center for Creativity

July 2–August 30, 2026

800 Main Street, Redwood City, California
rwccfc.org

The Center for Creativity, located in Redwood City's historic Hotel Sequoia, is a grassroots initiative driven by individuals who believe in the transformative power of the arts. Our mission is to create an inclusive, accessible arts center that nurtures creativity, strengthens community bonds, and empowers everyone to experience, create, and connect through the arts.

Rhythmix Cultural Works

July 4–August 29, 2026

2513 Blanding Avenue, Alameda, California
rhythmix.org

The K Gallery at Rhythmix Cultural Works brings people together and builds community by inspiring engagement in the arts. K Gallery is named after Kazuko (Kay) Koike, one of Rhythmix's founding donors. *Kazu* is the Japanese word for *peace*, *ko* means *child*, Kazuko Koike, child of peace, 1919–2020.

K Gallery presents six visual art exhibitions annually that reflect the vitality of local artists in the Bay Area community. The K Gallery was chosen BEST art gallery in Alameda by an Alameda Magazine ballot in 2016, by Alameda Peeps in 2025, and received a 1st Place Alameda Stars Award for best Art Gallery by the Alameda Post in 2026.

Dreaming and Doing Democracy

Two years ago, in the thick of a presidential campaign that was fast becoming a referendum on our democracy, Citizen Joy was born. We invited artists across the country to explore the joys of our system of government and the important choices we get to make because of the rights and freedoms we enjoy. Soon art centers, universities and circuses, dancers and puppeteers, teachers, actors, writers, musicians, and visual artists all over the country were creating and presenting work that shows why our democracy is worth saving.

From Bruce Springsteen, Bad Bunny, the bobbing blowup frogs of Portland, the vocal citizens of Minneapolis, and the beautiful, ingenious choirs singing, *You can change your mind!* to funny NO KINGS signs at rallies from Alabama to Alaska, our country has blossomed with humor and creativity. We need this inspiration and encouragement to commit to the arduous journey of rebuilding our democracy.

Views of Democracy: Gratitude and Aspiration, which opened in Pacifica at Sanchez Art Center in January 2025 and moved to Rhythmix Cultural Works in Alameda last fall, was the culmination of Citizen Joy's first year. It also created the momentum and community for this exhibition.

This year, 2026, marks the 250th birthday of our country and *O Say Can You See…* looks forward to the society we want to build over the next 250 years. It contains visions for the future rooted in the legacy of the past. Individually and collectively, the work engages with the dynamic tension between dreaming and doing as artist after artist offer their views and make it clear that democracy is not a spectator sport. *O Say Can You See…* came together because we see a need to create images of what we are fighting for as well as what we're standing against.

Some of the work was created by artists who were part of the *Views of Democracy* exhibit in 2025: Kevin L. Daniels, Beth Grossman, Esther Kutnick, Christine Ong-Dijcks, Ileana Soto, and Jayne Tucker. Many others are now joining an ever-expanding and diverse creative community, one that comes together with a shared sense of purpose.

In selecting the artwork for this show, we looked for pieces that thrill us, that give us joy. And we looked for art that shows us the way to our future.

In the work of 40 participating artists you will find a wide range of media and technique, from painting, sculpture, photography and mixed media to video, ceramic and fiber art. Some of the works are representational, others are fantastical; some are abstract, others include narrative. All these pieces call us to reflect on what we want and what it will take. Ric Ambrose's large scale drawing *Peet's Corner* depicts a sun-kissed, bustling community that is both an invitation to appreciate and to participate. Sue Bianchi's art quilt uses a garden metaphor to inspire us to cultivate hope. In naming *love, compassion, tolerance, manners, education, science, justice, and law*, she reminds us that we have the tools we need—*if we but use them*.

Lisa Bostwick reworks the familiar iconography of America to remind us that there has always been room for difference and debate in our country. In her words, "We are one country. This is why I paint the flag in red and then in blue . . . Both are America! The idea that in many there is one can never be overstated."

In his painting, *The Book Lover*, Kevin Daniels' portrait of a determined and hopeful bibliophile shows us in beautiful detail what it means to face our uncertain future with resolve and a good understanding of the legacy of democracy over the ages. Kevin adds, "I hope this painting provokes the same critical self-examination in others that it did in me during its creation."

O Say Can You See … is nothing if not a dialogue. In his abstract explorations, Michael Larson shows and says it beautifully:

> *A future worthy of our hopes is not singular or unified, but assembled through ongoing dialog … this piece imagines a future through which persistence is in working to find a common ground—the willingness to remain in relation, even when alignments feel out of sync.*

Debra Collins' precision papercut confronts uncertainty with lofty aspirations. In her words, *we cannot know exactly what the future holds, only that we are called to build toward it with hope*.

The artists of *O Say Can You See* … understand that the future is uncertain and that there is much work to be done to improve the experiment that is democracy.

We welcome you to this ongoing dialogue. What resonates? What now? What else?

Jeff Raz, Juror
Citizen Joy Founder

Barbara Kibbe, Curator
Citizen Joy Leader

May 2026

Drawing Breath

At this moment, it seems critically important to envision what we are fighting *for*; not only what we're standing against.

Aspiration: The act or process of drawing breath. The hope or ambition of achieving something.

I begin every day by drawing a breath and trying to envision what is possible—without ignoring the current reality. This is leading me to create a new body of work. *Drawing Breath* is an evolving collection of art books and containers fashioned from my inventory of 50+ years of printmaking. Books and containers hold aspirations, affirmations, and predictions to help us envision the future we want.

You are invited to contribute to this collection of visions for our future.

- What's the future you want for yourself and your family? Your community? Your country?
- What should be preserved and protected? What should change?
- Where do you see possibility?

Send an email to hello@barbarakibbe.com. You can phrase your aspirations as predictions, affirmations, or pithy fortune cookie fillers. Be specific, if you can. And please pass this request along to people in your network.

The vision for *Drawing Breath* rests on including a mountain of crowd-sourced aspirations. Send some now and more later. Or send them as the future unfolds before us—whenever you get a glimpse of opportunity or possibility.

www.barbarakibbe.com

Drawing Breath

Kevin L. Daniels

The Book Lover

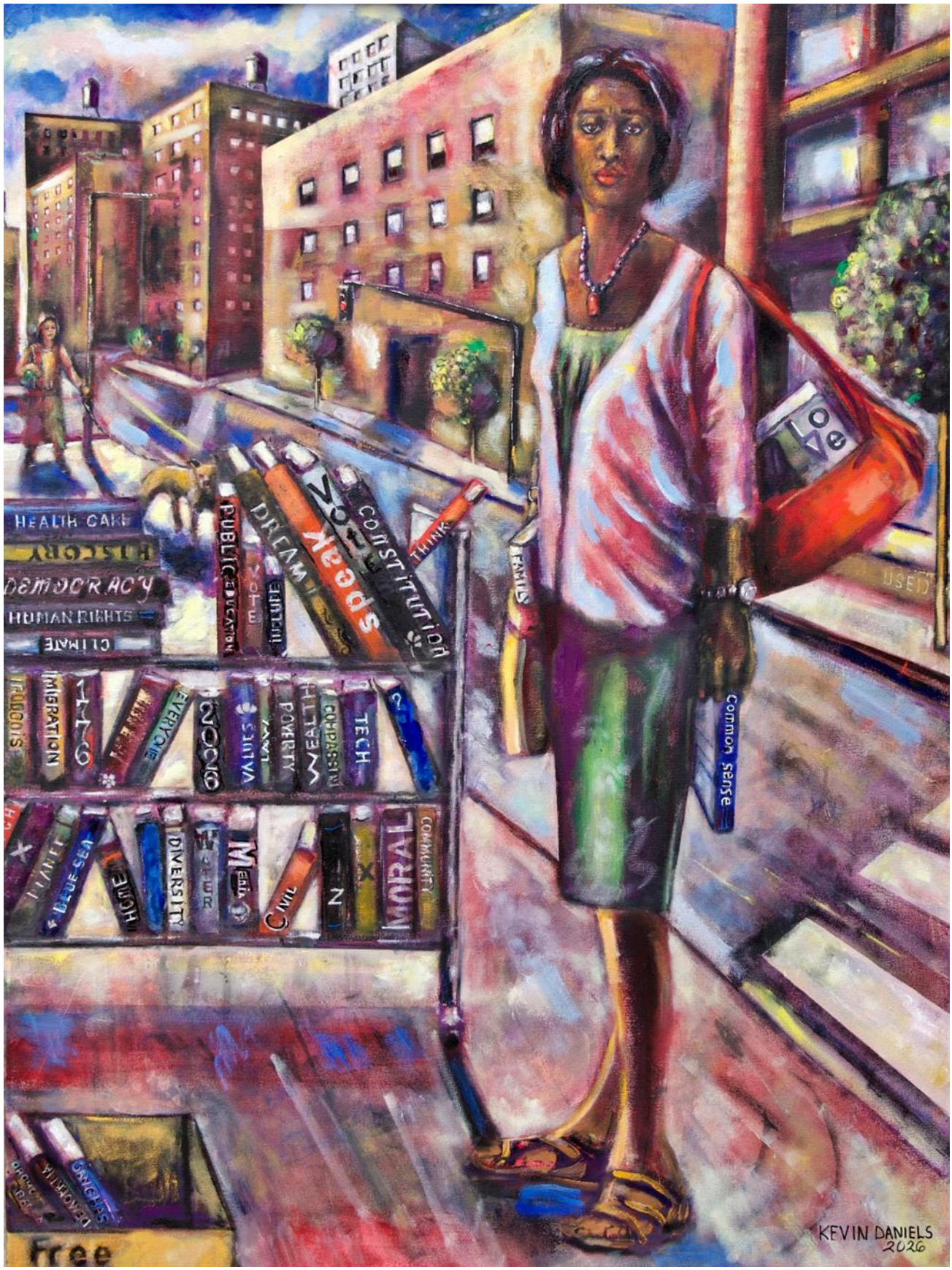
The story behind this painting is one of challenge, a project that took months to complete. Most of that time was spent clarifying my own thoughts about democracy. The painting depicts a woman of color standing before a bookshelf on a sidewalk. As a bibliophile, she scours the shelves for books representing the foundational ideas of American democracy and challenges to its future. In her bags, a book about love and family reveals her core universal values. Beyond the bookshelf, a dog peers at us, mirroring her curious, observant gaze as she looks at the viewer, asking what we truly value.

Having witnessed democratic values expand throughout my life and then watching them rapidly contract, I had struggled to find the right concept for this painting. I realized that to find meaning, I had to look past the daily news cycle and focus on what democracy meant in my own experience and words. This painting became a reflection of my own values—human rights, equality, freedom, and decency—which I have discovered are deeply embedded in all my art. Ideas that, for me, are not political, but rather human values that have become politicized to the point of polarization.

The woman in the painting represents us looking in the mirror, searching for our collective identity. She is an optimist and a practical person who values reason over dogma. The bookshelf introduces specific ideas spanning from 600 B.C. to modern America, illustrating that while implementation is the work of culture and context, these principles are ancient and belong to humankind. The books are old and used. They have the souls of the authors inside them, trying desperately to reach us today. The painting beckons for listening, courage, critical thinking, participation, and reflection on the thousands of years of human effort that made the idea of freedom and justice a goal to clench and hold tight. I hope this painting provokes the same critical self-examination in others that it did in me during its creation.

kevinlancedaniels.com

The Book Lover, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 36" x 2"


HEALTH CARE
HISTORY
DEMOCRACY
HUMAN RIGHTS
CLIMATE
PUBLIC EDUCATION
DREAM
VOTE
SPEAK
CONSTITUTION
THINK
FAMILY
LOVE
USED
COMMON SENSE
TROOPS
IMMIGRATION
EVERYONE
VALUES
POVERTY
WEALTH
COMPASSION
TECH
BLUE SEA
DIVERSITY
MORAL
COMMUNITY
CIVIL
Free
KEVIN DANIELS
2026

Curt Bianchi

American Barn

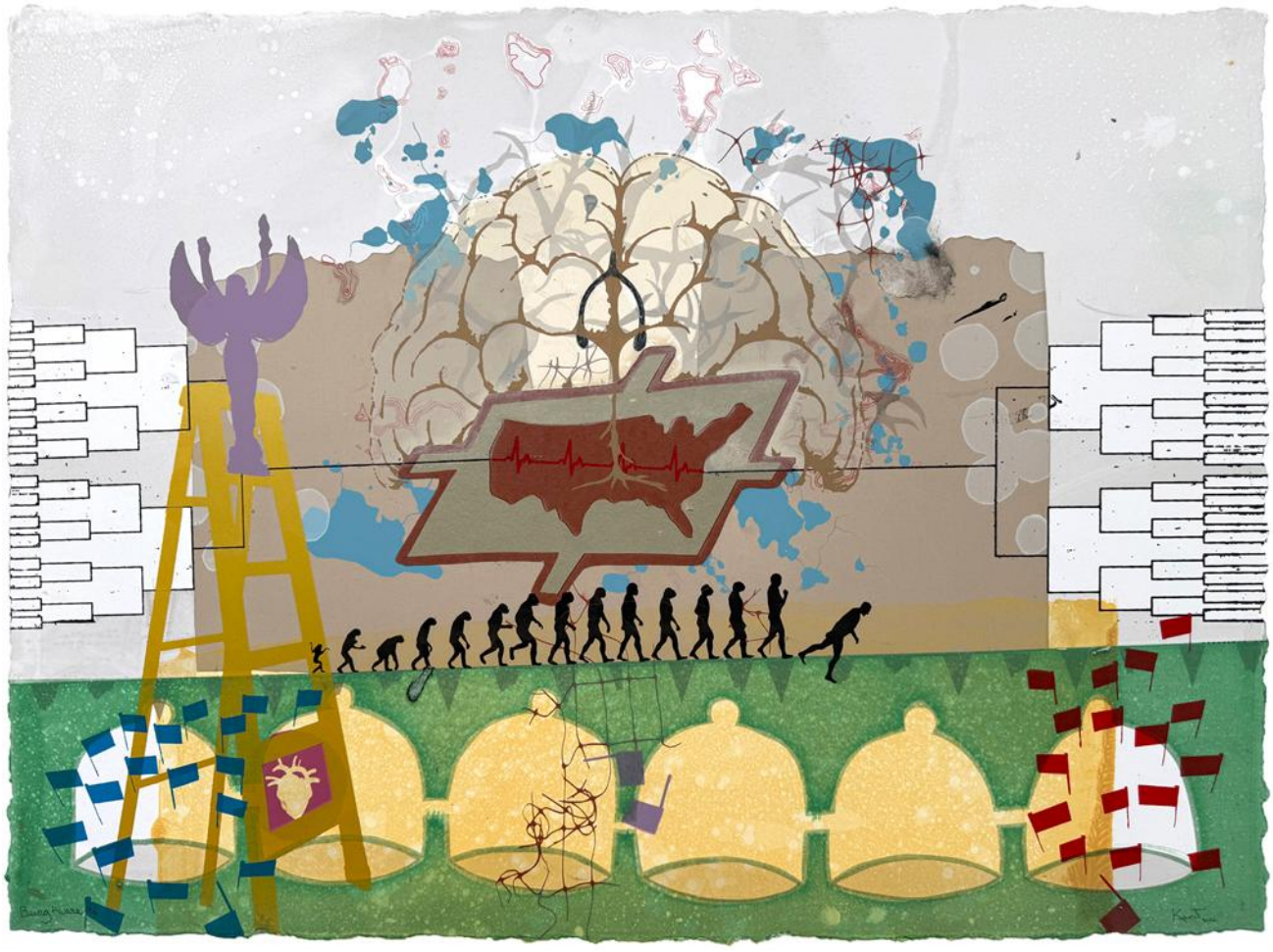
I saw this flag hanging on a barn while driving the backroads of Iowa. It made a statement on behalf of its owner: "I'm an American." It also made me wonder if the owner of this flag would consider me to be an American? The nation is so riven by hyper-partisanship that I couldn't say for sure. One faction claims the mantle of "real Americans" at the exclusion of the other.

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, let us live up to the words in that document: "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." That's what it means to be a real American.

www.curtbianchi.com

American Barn, Photograph, 12" x 9 " x 1"

Kent Manske



Being Aware 6

Democracy is an experiment—a malleable, continuously evolving system built on the premise that ordinary people can govern themselves. Civic engagement is democracy's lifeblood. Embracing honest conversation about our democracy's past, present, and future—celebrated, flawed, and unspoken—expands possibility and protects freedom. Vigorous, respectful debate is not a threat to democracy; it is democracy. Symbolism here includes right/left brain thinking divided by a wishbone, ideological competition charts becoming the nation's EKG pulse, and red and blue flags merging into purple at the center. Let's talk.

kentmanske.preneo.org

Being Aware 6; Monoprinting, screen printing, relief printing, and print collage; 22" x 30"

Being Aware 1

Wedge issues are weaponized by political influencers to fracture coalitions and opposition, diluting the power of unified groups. When ideological battles are fought with wedges, truth becomes the casualty and civil society decays. Here, a hawk and a dove calmly face each other while embodying opposing metaphors: Hawks favor conflict; doves seek negotiation. A small wedge turned upright representing "We The People" stops the larger wedge. This David and Goliath dynamic holds only if we refuse exploitation by politically motivated culture wars. Speaking honestly to those we presume are adversaries, and speaking truth to power, is democracy in action.

Being Aware 1; Monoprinting, screen printing, relief printing, and print collage; 22" x 30"

Ric Ambrose

Peet's Corner

My large scale graphite drawings examine the layered, often overlooked perspectives of contemporary urban life. I build intricate panoramic compositions that feel at once immediate and grandiose, offering a chance to navigate the curious complexities of urbanity and the human condition. The work is drawn from my journeys throughout the Bay Area, immersed in the exotic diversity of its urban environment, and the enigma of humanity and life's banality.

The drawings are not literal documents but carefully arranged reconstructions of time, memory, and space. By assembling fragments of diverse environments, and human interactions, the artwork presents a visual language shaped by tension, paradox, and motion.

Using the most basic artmaking tools—graphite pencils and erasers—allows me to recreate a colorless yet colorful world that offers a timeless sense of life experiences.

ambrosedrawings.com

Peet's Corner, Graphite on arches paper, 24" x 75.25" x 1"

ROAR

O Say Can You See

The founding of the United States of America didn't happen overnight. The Declaration of Independence was signed following decades of dissatisfaction and distrust of the ruling British monarchy. And the conflict stretched on for decades more, including the bloody war of 1812. With the United States still at war with Britain on September 14,1814, Francis Scott Key, a lawyer and poet, was detained on a British warship. He saw a tattered flag in the mud and penned what would become our country's national anthem, with the memorable beginning and ending lines:

> *O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,*
>
> *What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,*
>
> *Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight*
>
> *O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?*
>
> *And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,*
>
> *Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there …*
>
> *O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave*
>
> *O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

The struggle for freedom continues to this day. The reality of our own Federal government deploying masked agents and the National Guard in cities and communities throughout the United States of America—dragging people from streets, cars, schools and homes, flinging tear gas and even bullets—is horrifyingly reminiscent of that British assault two centuries ago. The question that Scott Key posed then can be asked again today: Does the *star-spangled banner yet wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?*

The answer is emphatically yes.

The contemporary uprising and resistance is growing. First five, then seven, then over eight million people came together during historic No Kings protests in the last year alone. Millions are standing up for the values we hold dear: that all people are equal and that our democratic republic is firmly established to be **of the people**, **by the people**, and **for the people**. Ever aspirational, constantly striving, even while suffering set-backs, people are demanding better for our nation. As Abraham Lincoln once said, this nation shall have a new birth of freedom and shall not perish from the earth.

Art, in all its forms, brings each of us the opportunity to feel and find a sense of connection to this larger reality. As cultural and music critic Greil Marcus wrote,

> *If you're lucky, at the right time you come across music that is not only "great," or interesting, or "incredible," or fun, but actually sustaining. Through some elusive but tangible process, a piece of music cuts through all defenses and makes sense of every fear and desire you bring to it. As it does so, it exposes all you've held back, and then makes sense of that, too.*

May you hear the sustaining music in the work of this exhibition. May you find joy, peace and happiness through this collection of artworks that celebrate the liberty and freedoms that belong to us all. And may you never lose hope

Cindy Abbott
Executive Director, Sanchez Art Center

Barbara Carbone

Eyes on Us

Eyes on Us captures the everyday life of a woman who navigates a world with a sense of vulnerability and hope. Through mixed-media layering, the portrait re-imagines a life built from fragments, revealing her resiliency, especially when democratic freedoms and systems are being broken. With her unwavering gaze, she reminds us that liberty requires a constant presence. She is a witness to our stories of humanity.

Eyes on Us; Tape, paper, oil stick and pastel; 8.5" x 8.5" x .5"

Barbara Kibbe

Right Birds

From *Rule of Law* and *Freedom of Speech* to *Equal Protection* and *Freedom from Want and Need*, *Right Birds* is a celebration of our basic rights and freedoms as set forth in the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and the United Nations' *Declaration of Human Rights*.

Right Birds is also a call to action. Right Whales were hunted to near extinction in the19th century and are still endangered. It's commonly thought that whalers called them "right" because they were easy to kill. As I prepare this statement it seems that our basic rights and freedoms are endangered. It's up to us to ensure that over the next 250 years, the United States of America are in fact united about the importance of basic human rights, and that dignity and freedom are the birthright of all our peoples.

barbarakibbe.com

Right Birds, Art quilt, 45" x 44"

Ginny Parsons

Bike with Wings

In this work I used flowers and bikes, symbols which represent hope. As part of the collage areas, I used ears, symbolizing listening; cartoons of hands shaking for cooperation; and abstract lines of blue and red to say that America is still a place for a better life. The wings on the bike and the upward strokes are meant to give the feeling of freedom. I tried to mash in lots of images in the collage areas as a way to say we are all in this together and we need collective well being. I think of flowers as something everyone finds beautiful, something that represents common ground. Same with the bicycle, it's a way of getting around that's good for the earth, and affordable, and can give more exercise—and through that, a better life.

Bike with Wings, Acrylic with collage and beeswax on canvas, 30" x 40" x 2"

Tim Armstrong

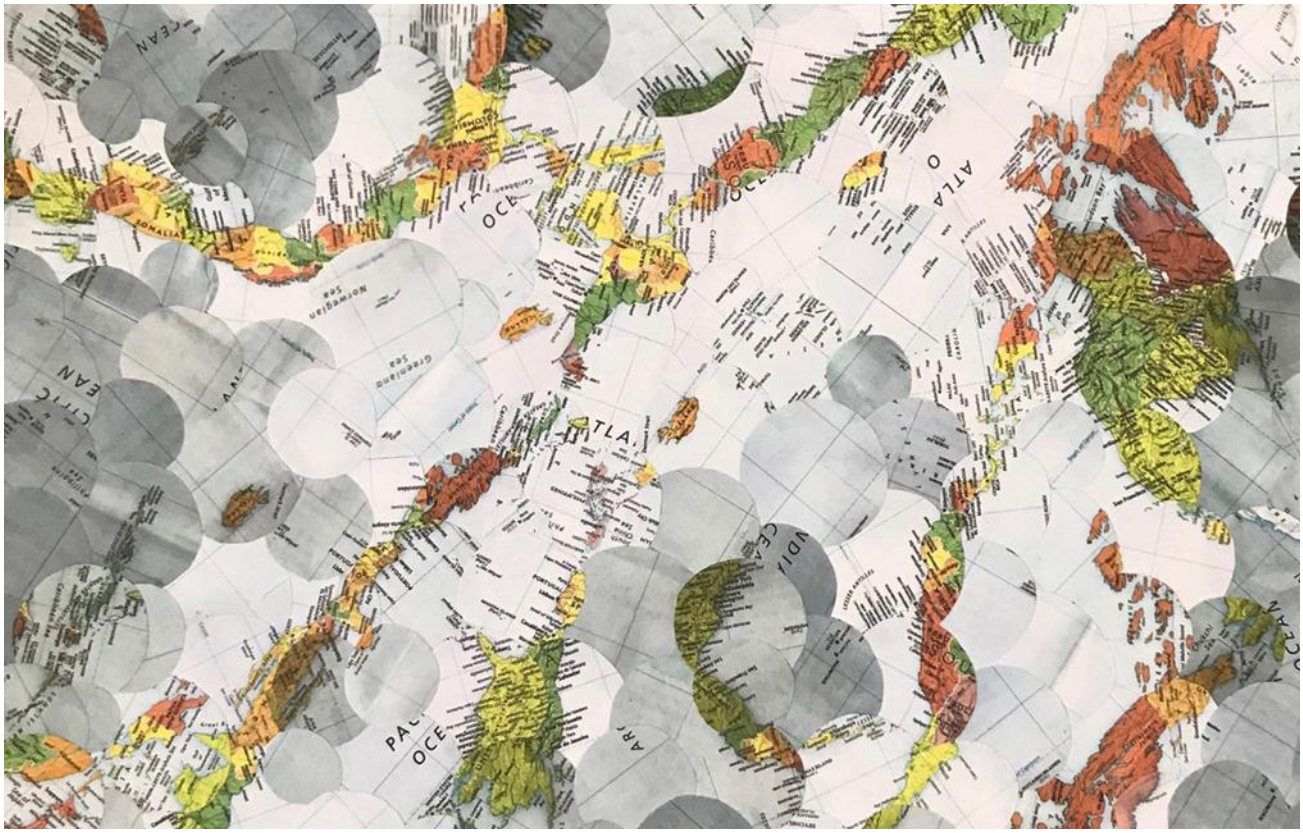
Satellites

I had a simple idea. Turn three basketballs inside-out. Put them on a plant stand. Garage art, American style. Like them, I'm a bit blind in my optimism. With hope, humor, and art we'll find comfort in a calamity. But in a place of overabundance, we will still hunger without them.

sites.google.com/view/artstrong/home

Satellites, Rubber basketballs,15" x 15" x 15"

Rachel Katz



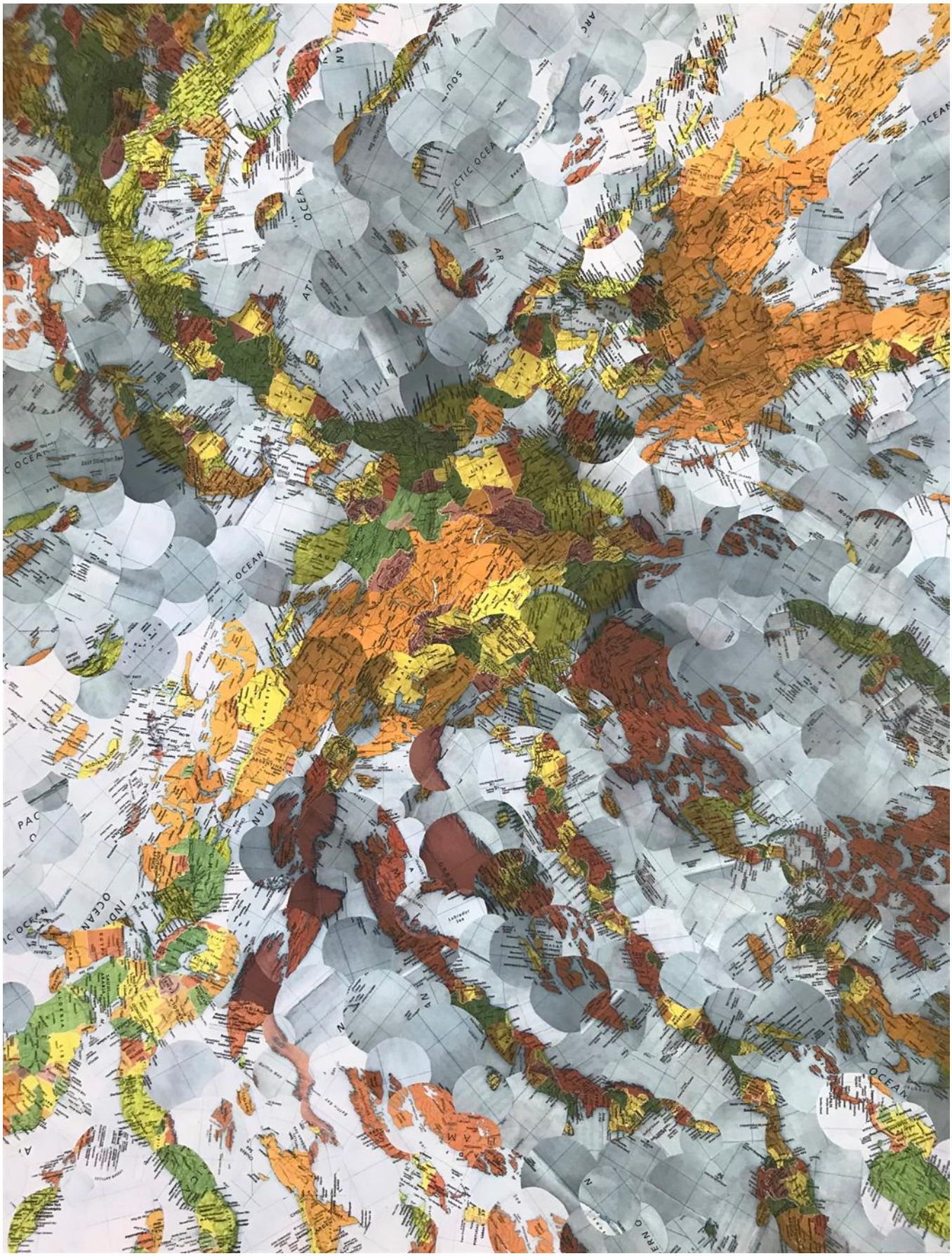
Fallout

I am constantly wondering why I make things. Or why I am drawn to making things. But when I do, I feel more whole. I have worked with sticks, fibers, wire and mesh, fifty years of my shredded journals, torn-up maps of the world, things I pick up off the street. Everything is a potential material and inspiration. I love to put materials together that seemingly don't go together. I love to tear things up. I love to wrap things. I love to bind things together. I am compelled to look below the surface—nothing is quite as satisfying. Digging, layering, encasing, dismembering, remembering. I'm drawn to both order and chaos. I find repetition comforting and meditative. I also like to shake things up, to evoke emotions that may be uncomfortable or, at the very least, thought-provoking. I am oriented both inward (the psyche, the body) and outward (the joys and awe, and the heartbreaks and injustices of the world we live in). My hope is to scratch my viewer's consciousness, so that they will remember or feel a hint, a glimmer, of something they previously hadn't "known."

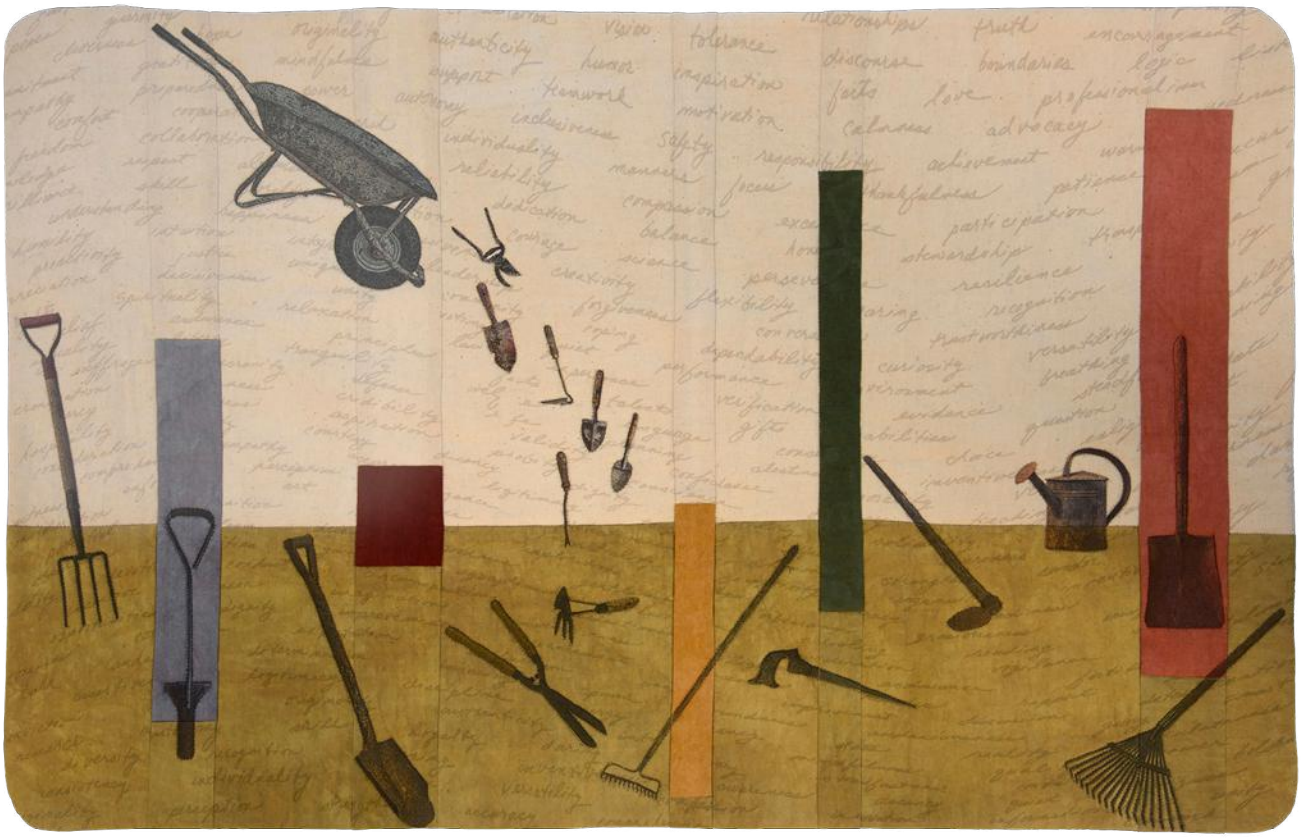
In my *Fallout* collages, I use maps as inspiration. In so many ways, our current world is in disarray. In doing this work, I ponder boundaries, borders, identities, and how we both connect with each other. In tearing up the maps, I get to imagine different worlds, ones in which borders and boundaries are blown apart, reconfigured, and new connections are made. Countries and peoples who have never shared a land now do so. Conflicts are rearranged. I am immersing myself in the emotional chaos of our current world while attempting to capture and communicate these feelings in a visual form.

@rachel_katz_art

Fallout #3 (detail), Paper collage (using maps), 25.5" x 19.5"
Oppostie page: *Fallout #2* Paper collage (using maps), 25.5" x 19.5"



Susan Bianchi



The Tools We Need

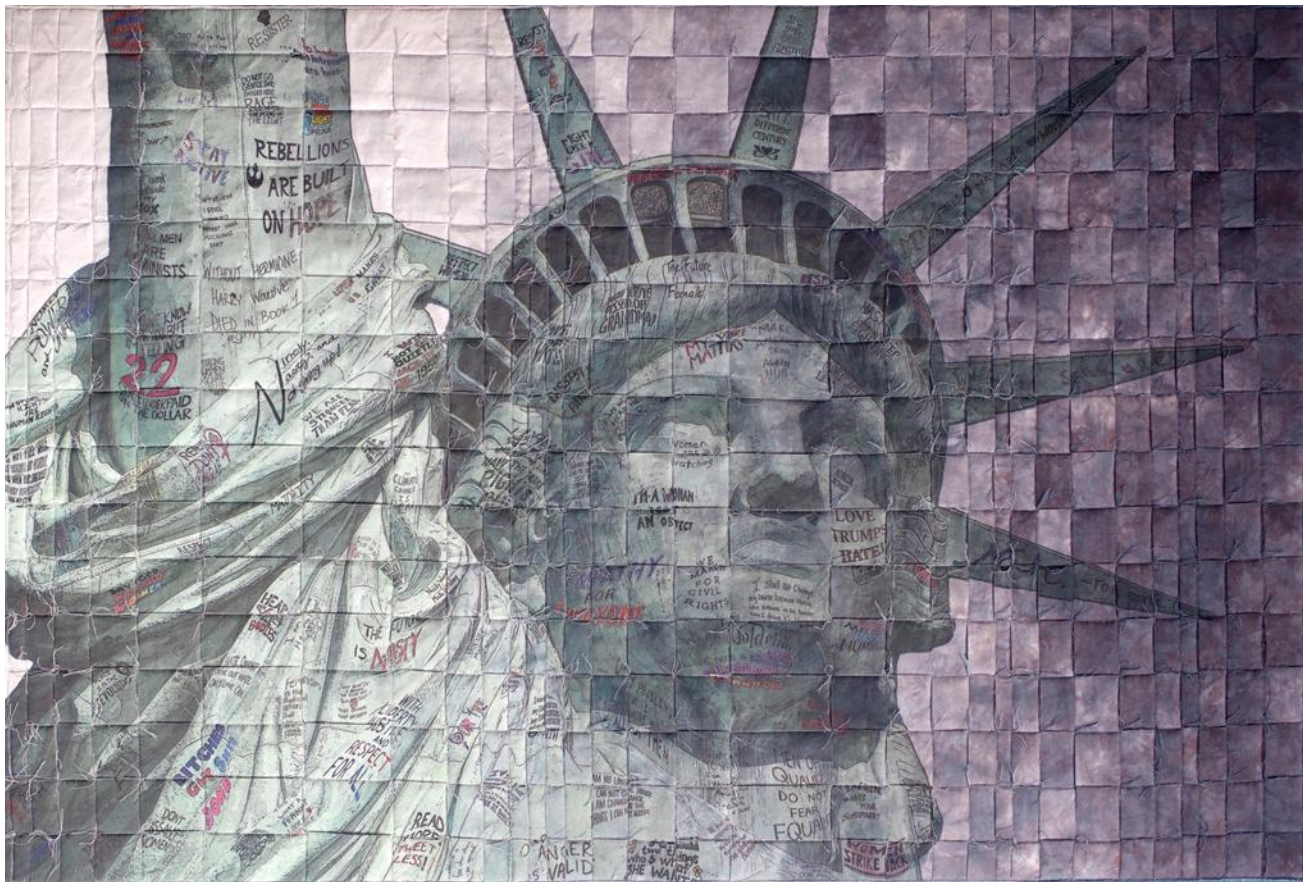
How many of us have heard: Make sure you have the tools for the job.

With the current state of our nation, we have a huge job ahead of us to ensure that the future we visualize and desire can and will be realized. What tools do we have and what tools do we need to accomplish this daunting task?

The images of garden tools in this piece convey the idea of growing hope. We use these tools to cultivate a flourishing garden while removing what isn't wanted or necessary.

The tools we need to recreate our country for the future aren't as tangible. They are qualities, character traits, universal ideals, and actions that we can practice daily and that make us conscious of our impact on the world around us. Things like love, compassion, tolerance, manners, education, science, justice, and law are just a few of the tools we need to shape our future. We do have the tools we need, if we but use them.

The Tools We Need; Fiber, digital printing; 20" x 30" x .25"



Liberty Marches

On January 21st, 2017, the Women's March took place around the world in protest of the character and policies of the 45th president of the United States of America. We marched in support of liberty for all people. This piece was created to reflect my feelings at the time of that first Women's March. It is nearly 10 years later and the work is not done. We watch protests grow across the nation and world as our liberties and rights are attacked daily.

The symbol of our country's freedom, commonly known as the Statue of Liberty, is actually entitled Liberty Enlightening the World. Liberty carries a torch in her right hand lighting the way forward, and a tablet in her left inscribed with the date of our declared independence. A broken chain at her feet symbolizes the abolition of slavery.

I imagine Liberty in 2017 wanting to march and also knowing how important it is to hold high the symbols of freedom. Emblazoned with the words of over 100 marchers from that day in 2017, she re-enlightens the world.

That is our duty as citizens of our times: to uphold research, education, truth, our rights, and our liberties. The fabric of liberty is imperfectly woven together. Sometimes it frays and unravels or even hangs by a thread. We can strengthen the cloth. Working together, marching together, we are joining Liberty in her work to enlighten the world.

www.suebianchi.com

Liberty Marches; Fiber, digital printing; 24" x 36" x .25"

Debra Collins

Let's Rise To The City On The Hill

As events unfold in our country and around the world, I've found myself grieving the state of the United States. It can feel as though we've lost our way. For all our imperfections, we once seemed to be moving—however unevenly—toward the greater good, toward that shared vision of a "city on the hill." Today, our divisions pull us into warring tribes, and the soul of our nation feels strained, even explosive.

I created this papercut as both a lament and a reminder. The eagle—our national symbol—embodies a strength, clarity, and determination that I believe we still possess. It lifts us above the fray, above the chaos we too easily accept as normal. The city on the hill remains before us, marked by Truth, Mercy, Justice, and Liberty. I've woven these words into the design—almost camouflaged—because these guiding ideals are still there, waiting to be rediscovered. The architecture blends real and imagined forms, a reminder that we cannot know exactly what the future holds, only that we are called to build toward it with hope.

This piece is my hope that we can rise again—together—if we choose to hold fast to one another and to the ideals that once inspired us to build something better.

debraAcollins.com

Let's Rise To The City On The Hill, Hand cut paper, 60" x 30"

TRUTH

Evelyn Klein

Oneness

As artists, we can feel intuitively and transform feelings and emotions into works of different artistic nature, to express ourselves. The world feels incredibly divisive right now, and I want to find the common threads that bring us together.

We are all ONE, regardless of the color of our skin, language, origin or other differentiation. This commonality has existed since the beginnings of time; it is part of our DNA. The world is one body. We cannot be whole while parts of our world suffer—for a part of us suffers with them. Wholeness begins when we feel the suffering of others as our own.

I am drawn to work with subjects that involve our world, its integrity and survival. I have been studying Kabbalah for many decades, and work with a small spiritual group that follows this tradition.

I heard this call for entry in my heart and soul. From conception to its final state, I worked through it technically and spiritually, creating an artwork that speaks personally as well as universally. I feel its healing energy permeating into the space it inhabits.

www.evelynklein.com

Oneness, Ceramics, 36" x 12" x 12"

Aleph
Oneness
Trust
Diversity
Love
One

Ember de Boer

March on America

March on America is a zine made in response to the urgent need for immediate action. Hot off the press for the first "No Kings" protest last year, it was distributed for free to active citizens on the ground during a historic day of collective action. It includes research on the different strategies we have at our disposal and offers historical examples of effective resistance, intended to inspire those who want to carry their protest beyond the street and into sustained community work.

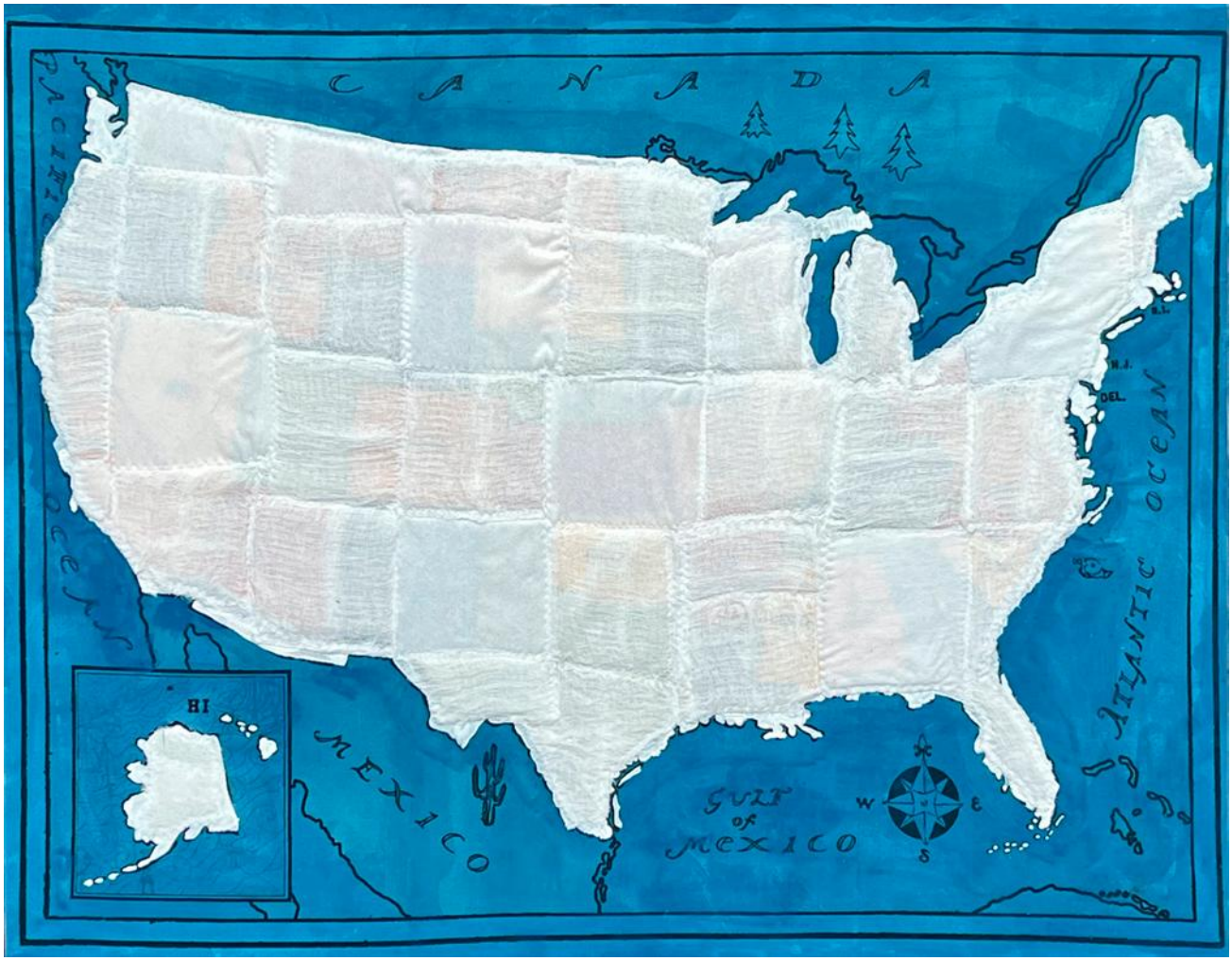
March on America is rooted firmly in imagination, speculating on possible forms of resistance and offering ideas for how to keep collective action alive as time drags on and conditions shift. The work reflects on endurance as much as urgency, asking how movements sustain themselves beyond moments of intensity.

This piece also offers a glimpse into how much has already changed in just a year: what has been lost, and what still remains to be protected.

emberdeboer.com

March on America, Newpaper zine, 11" x 17"

Melissa Wilson



Grace on Thee

Grace on Thee is a map of the United States quilted in white surgical gauze. This expresses my most desperate hope for healing in our country. I believe that all people in our country deserve peace, freedom, safety, and love. I am distressed by the current rhetoric and actions that terrorize our migrants, LGBTQ+ (especially transgendered) people, journalists, academics, minority ethnic groups (especially Palestinians and Muslim adherents), election workers, and women. In my search for hope, I have covered the United States in salve and dressings to let us rest and let us heal as a nation.

This is a piece of a larger body of work called *Peace Work* which uses the language of quilting to explore pathways to peace and healing in the United States.

Grace on Thee; Fabric, acrylic paint, cradled board; 24" x 30" x 1.5"

Susan Giles

Sacramento Gay Pride Parade

As a photographic and mixed-media artist, at the wonderful age of 78, I believe we are all one people connected since the beginning of human life. The photograph I have submitted is iconic because it depicts a day and time when I marched to the California State Capitol with my wife and hundreds of other LGBTQ people and their supporters for the right to be our authentic selves. I saw the two women standing on the curb facing the California State Capitol, so I ran up behind them to capture this photograph. With the current presidential regime in place, I am afraid we may lose the rights that we fought so hard to achieve. My hope is that by speaking up, and sharing our art and stories, we will survive the next few years.

www.artpal.com/susanleegiles

Sacramento Gay Pride Parade, Digitally altered photograph on canvas, 40" x 32" x .75"

ONE WAY

Susan Friedman

Our America, Painting, 30" x 20" x 2"
Opposite page: *Greenland*, Painting, 40" x 40"

Our America

Our America is part of a series inspired by what we were taught in school: to be kind, to protect our freedoms, to honor our flag, and much more. Yet, we find ourselves in a nation that is eroding the land, trying to take over other countries, and erasing our history. *Our America* was inspired by a vintage children's book, in which I placed a Polaroid transfer of a whale to represent freedom amid a barren landscape.

Greenland

Greenland is a painting that acknowledges the melting of glaciers, but more deeply it symbolizes the latent beauty and potential within the earth, urging us to look beyond immediate, strategic, and often transactional interests, to discover what lies beneath.

susanfriedmanphoto.com

Mima Cataldo

Partners

As a documentary photographer, I want to preserve the spirit and voice of the people I meet and capture a moment in history in which people are standing up for their beliefs. *Partners* reflects the view that sexual orientation need not be seen as a threat to society, and should be celebrated in its own unique way.

Partners, Photography, 14" x 11" x 1"

On Freedom and Art

Art is a reflection of now. As artists, we summon our talent, ability and passion to express what is currently in our hearts.

In a democratic society, freedom is not just "freedom from" something, it is "freedom to" do something. When artists portray a positive view of society they help express that we are a free people, free to imagine a future fulfillment.

Politics is a promise of the future. It can be a bright and liberating vision, or it can bring forth the darkness of repression and fear.

Regressive politics uses art to place citizens in a nostalgic loop of the past. "Remember when we were great?" Freedom is not a matter of simply complaining about loss, it also provides room for creating a positive future. Art gives us an avenue for this pursuit.

Art is not about the government restraining one from expression, it is about the freedom to express what one feels. We have the freedom to see ourselves any way we wish, positively or negatively.

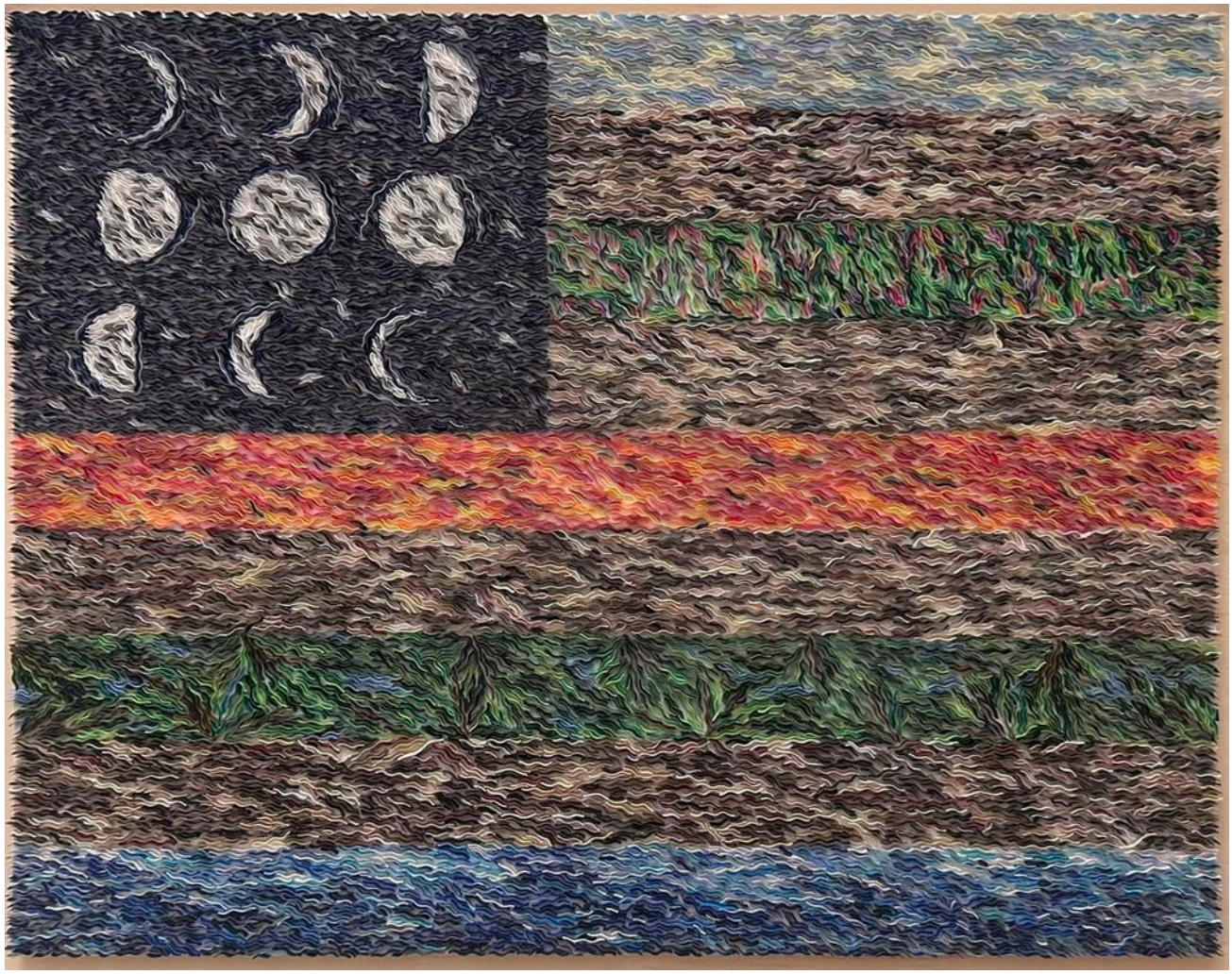
Art and freedom are inter-dependent. They practically cannot exist without each other.

America is still a democracy. This means we live in a rules-based society in which freedom is nurtured and made real. As artists, we have a great responsibility to express ourselves freely and without fear. It is in this way that we make sure other citizens see that they too may express themselves as they wish. This is freedom.

Citizen Joy wants to thank the artists who contributed to this exhibition. We also thank you for participating in the nurturance of freedom by showing up and experiencing the art of *O Say Can You See* … with us.

Martin Ganapoler
Citizen Joy Leader

Daniele Derenzi



One Universe, Under Goddess

The opening of the Star Spangled Banner instantly brings to mind the image of a flag. I had the words, "O say can you see by the dawn's early light" and the American Flag on fast repeat while I was in the early stages of creating this piece. With the strength of the words and image in my head, I began to grow an idea of what a flag might look like in the early light if we were all one with nature and each other. I imagined how goddesses, trees, flowers, nature, and the phases of the moon influence much around us—even if we don't recognize it from minute to minute.

My piece *One Universe, Under Goddess*, represents a flag that symbolizes the power of air, earth and people, flowers, fire, forest, ocean and, water—with the moon and stars guiding our way. I have always envisioned our country taking care of all, respecting what mother nature has gifted to us, guided by the moon and stars, embracing a place where earth and people blend into one.

www.danielephotography.com

One Universe, Under Goddess; Paper assemblage; 14" x 18" x .5"

Esther Kutnick

Lean On Me

Our culture insists that we strive to stand as individuals, taking care of ourselves, facing challenges, and solving problems on our own. Independence does not preclude interdependence. Being influenced by others isn't weakness. It's how learning and growth happen.

Many of us feel overwhelmed and confused by the chaos and acrimony in our country. Older folks may feel alone and abandoned by a youth-obsessed culture, while younger people struggle to find purpose when the future seems bleak. We can lean on one another and become stronger for it.

Standing Up

Standing alone is hard, and courageous individuals aren't naive about the risks of speaking out. When the commitment is foundational, a part of who we are, threats can strengthen resolve. Despite being shot in the head by the Taliban, 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai continued her fight for the rights of women and girls in her native Pakistan. She has extended her campaign to include women and girls all over the world, and a community has grown around her in support. In standing up, we accept that we might fail, but we will find meaning in the act of standing up, as well as embracing a connection to the people we're standing for.

Lean On Me, Photography, 16" x 20" x 1"
Opposite page: *Standing Up*, Photography, 29" x 21" x 1"

Priscilla Otani

Just Because

Just Because examines the chaos in 2026, backgrounded by the American Flag. The flag belongs to citizens of all walks of life. We see it everywhere, in sports stadiums, classrooms, public institutions, and outside homes on national holidays. Its promise of freedom and opportunity provides hope and inspiration for citizens and aspiring immigrants alike. In *Just Because*, the American flag is tattered, but is reconstituted through hand-stitching. Tags of resistance with the words *witness*, *record*, and *protect* band together in the foreground, reminding us of how citizens have responded to this moment in history.

www.mrpotani.com

Just Because, Mixed media, 40" x 16" x .5"

JUST
RECORD
VENEZUELAN
bomb iran
SEIZE
ICE RAIDS
WITNESS
FOR
PROTECT
BECAUSE

Igor Gasowski

Still, the Stars Hold

This work holds a tension between the undefined and the almost-tangible. The gestural, expansive cloud, shapeless yet alive, represents the fullness of conscious experience: our questions, our confusion, our longing. Against it, stars emerge. Familiar, luminous—and grounded in a shared visual language—are symbols we already know, seen freshly, asking to be believed in again.

And then there is the black. Forceful, unsparing, splattered across the surface like an interruption. It is today—the weight of it, the chaos of it, the moments that knock the breath from you. It doesn't apologize for being there, because it doesn't have to. We know it. We are living it.

But here is what the work insists on: The stars remain. They are not erased by the black, not swallowed by the cloud. They hold. And that holding—that persistence of light and form against everything pressing in—is where hope lives. Not as a feeling that arrives when things get easier, but as something present right now, underneath the struggle, giving us the tenacity to keep moving toward the future we want.

I am drawn to thresholds, not as endings, but as openings. Where the figurative meets the abstract, where one medium flows into another, where something unexpected comes into focus. This is where futures take shape—in the space between what is and what could be.

igorgasowski.com

Still, the Stars Hold; Mixed media: watercolor, ink and acrylic; 20" x 16" x 2.125 "

Beth Grossman

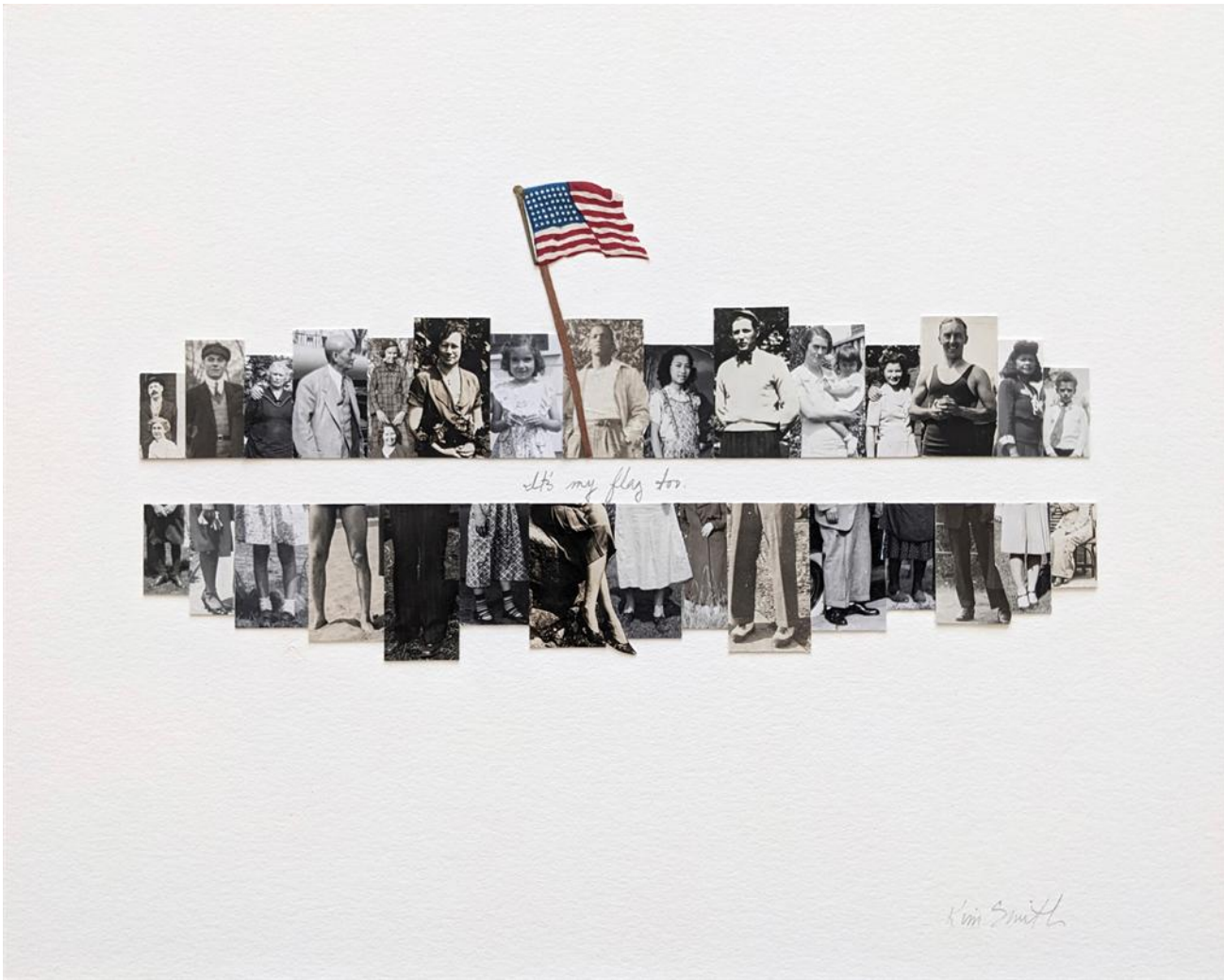
Dominoes

A chain reaction is set in motion. Falling dominoes evoke both fragility and momentum. This video asks what comes next, and more importantly: How do we choose to respond? It stands as a quiet assertion of resilience, a reminder that even in moments of collapse, there is a collective responsibility to rise, to resist, and to continue shaping a more just and equitable future.

www.bethgrossman.com

Dominoes, Still photo from the video

Kim Smith



PS It's My Flag Too. #2

Made from vintage vernacular photos, my *Peoplescapes* show that we can all get along. The addition of our beautiful flag and writing "It's my flag too." allows us to reclaim what has been usurped by some, and to remind people that it is indeed everyone's flag.

vintagesmith.com

PS It's My Flag Too. #2, Vintage vernacular photos on rag board, 9.375" x 11.5" x 1"

Michael Larson

Codex #2

Codex #2 reflects a belief that a future worthy of our hopes is not singular or unified, but assembled through ongoing dialog. The central form is a point of convergence or common understanding, but is not a fixed ground. This is something that is continually redefined by what surrounds it.

Rather than offering resolution, the piece imagines a future shaped by what remains—where continuity is carried not through agreement, but through the willingness to remain in relation, even when common ground can feel incomplete or out of reach.

www.mdlarson.art

Codex #2; Oil, oil pastel, silver metal leaf on wood; 36" x 36" x 2"

Neha Sharma

Immigrants Make America Great

Immigrants Make America Great uses the visual language of traditional American samplers to present a contemporary political statement. The phrase is hand-embroidered in blue thread and framed by a red blackwork embroidery border that references familiar patriotic colors and the aesthetics of vintage domestic embroidery.

Historically, samplers recorded values, morals, and cultural identity. By adopting this format, the work places a modern message within a tradition of documenting what a society believes about itself. The phrase reframes nationalist, hate-driven rhetoric by centering the people whose labor, knowledge, and cultural traditions continue to shape the United States.

Immigration is often framed through crisis and exclusion, and this work proposes a different vision—it asserts immigration as foundational to American identity and future possibility.

www.nehaxstitch.com

Immigrants Make America Great, Embroidery, 8.75" x 11.5" x .5"

Holly Downing

Embrace

Embrace was painted during the last presidential election cycle. Over the years, I've used the American flag in a number of previous paintings, most of which are very dark. In this case I was feeling hopeful and gentle, envisioning a woman leader who would embrace traditional American as well as women's values that I believe in—those of nurturing and supporting; valuing peace and compromise over conflict, power or dominance; valuing children and adults of all nationalities and skin colors; nurturing the environment, plants and animals, clean air and water. These are still my aspirations for the future of our country, and our next leaders, as well as for the world.

www.hollydowning.com

Embrace, Oil/canvas, 32" x 46" x 1.5"

Patty Owyang

Tunnel Vision or Light at the End of the Tunnel

Tunnel Vision or Light at The End of the Tunnel depicts an abandoned amusement park attraction as an "Iris Tunnel." You can choose to enter the eye going towards close-mindedness, or on the opposite side, walk towards the light with hope. The eye tunnel is warning "Enter at Your Own Risk" speaking about choosing closed-minded views of current events or choosing hope for a brighter future. There is a door on the side of the tunnel where one can climb out into the open.

Tunnel Vision or Light at the End of the Tunnel; Ceramic; wood, figurine, paper sign; 6" x 6" x 5"

OPEN
Welcome

Christine Ong-Dijcks

Caution - Fragile

We protect what we value. We take care of things that are fragile. We wrap these items to make sure they stay safe and in one piece. We keep what is important to us. In this piece, I use common objects that are familiar to everyone. You know these objects: a box, styrofoam peanuts. And everyone knows the Statue of Liberty and what it stands for. Putting them together hopefully conveys a simple but strong message: Democracy is delicate and precious. Please let's all protect it!

Where is Our True North?

This painting is posing a question: Where is our true north as a country? What is it that we as a people want to be, stand for, and project to the world?

I am shocked that we live in a time—in this country—where armed agents roam the streets in masks. I hoped we would never see this here. But it happened. I believe that this country will re-emerge from a dark period and will come back to its place as true north in a troubled world. There must be that belief. There must still be that ray of light. Can you see it? If you do, let's go out and bring our country back. We the people can pull ourselves back from the brink. We have that power.

www.christineong.com

Where is Our True North?, Oil on canvas, 36" x 36" x 1.5"
Opposite page: *Caution - Fragile*, Graphite and Charcoal on paper, 24" x 18"

Jude Pittman

Happiness

The greatest hope I have for my country is simply that Americans will have choices in the making of their lives.

As an artist I have chosen to make art with awareness of societal and political content. The human form has been my primary image for decades. Anatomy is a visual language. There is a tension in this friendly embrace, but joy in knowing that the struggle is worth the effort when affection is the result. As Americans, we are neighbors, and the struggles must be worth the effort.

www.judepittmanart.com

Happiness, Oil on canvas, 30" x 24" x 2"

PreNeo Press

Meaning Maker

Meaning Maker **is** a guided interactive response structure interrogating diverse cultural topics. As a social practice project, these fill-out-form pamphlets are distributed globally, free of charge. *Meaning Maker* aims to be both poignant and irreverant, with a goal of encouraging critical self-reflection. The American Citizenship edition focuses on aspects, perceptions, and falacies associated with citizenship as it applies to today's world. *Meaning Maker* editions include: Academic Conference, American Citizenship, Art Viewing Experience, Control, Family Gathering, Food, Higher Education, Periodic Personal Evaluation, Relationship to Nature, and U.S. Presidential Elections.

PreNeo Press (Kent Manske & Nanette Wylde) is a conceptual space which engages in collaboration and social practice community building by creating projects, publications, and opportunities which celebrate the Art Life. PreNeo projects include the creation of artist residencies, interviews with West Coast creatives, a wide range of publishing projects and conceptual interventions, including *Meaning Maker*, political tracts, and candy colored peace buttons.

meaningmaker.org

Above: A selection of *Meaning Maker* pamphlets
Opposite page: *Meaning Maker* acrylic kiosk with decorative wall vinyl, 20" x 13" x 3"
Pages 58–59: *Meaning Maker* American Citizenship edition

Meaning Maker
American Citizenship Edition
American Citizenship
This is Art.

- Meaning Maker American Citizenship Edition provides a structure for making the most of your American experience.

Your personal tool for a "Value Added" experience.

- Organize your thoughts and cultivate purpose every time you question or think you understand what it means to be American. Great for election season banter, term papers, office parties, mental gymnastics, stimulating discussions, family feuds, nostalgia, international travel preparation, and social gatherings of all types and sizes.
- Complete periodically. Share with friends and strangers.
- Over time, Meaning Maker American Citizenship Edition will provide you with a cohesive concept of the American experience.
- Meaning Maker American Citizenship Edition is good for denying affiliation; impressing friends and lovers; inspecting bandwagons; making foreign contacts; looking smart on paper; endearing oneself to like-minded cronies; reinforcing fear, loathing, and patriotism; general disillusionment and denial; and adding spice to all sorts of conversations.

Meaning Maker comes in a variety of experiences.
Download and print Meaning Makers
for all of your reflective quests.

Log onto meaningmaker.org
to share your Meaning Maker experience.

Meaning Maker, a conceptual art project by PreNeo Press ©2007

TRIVIA *(popular knowledge)*

	true	false
The president can declare war	❑	❑
There is a red button	❑	❑
The first lady is on the payroll	❑	❑
The president must serve in the military	❑	❑
The president must be a lawyer	❑	❑
The president must be Christian	❑	❑
The president must be male	❑	❑
The president must be white	❑	❑
The president must be wealthy	❑	❑
The president must be heterosexual	❑	❑
The president must be intelligent	❑	❑
The president must look good on TV	❑	❑
The president has his own bathroom	❑	❑
The first man is the president's husband	❑	❑
Presidents never lie	❑	❑
Land of the free, home of the brave	❑	❑
All Americans must speak English	❑	❑
Right wing media tell the truth	❑	❑
Left wing media tell the truth	❑	❑
Corporate media tell the truth	❑	❑
The left is right	❑	❑
The right is wrong	❑	❑

The year I was born:

The President was _____

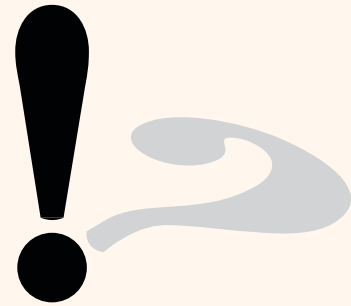
The National Debt was $_____

The National Debt currently is $_____

Date these historical events

? 1787 1861 1863 1892 1920 1929 1941 1954 1973 1991 1969 1996 2006 2025 ?

_____ The attack on Pearl Harbor
_____ U.S. Women's suffrage
_____ Beginning of the Civil War
_____ First humans to walk on the Moon
_____ Launch of Meaning Maker
_____ Indian Removal Act
_____ The end of the Cold War
_____ Equal Rights Amendment
_____ U.S. Constitution is adopted
_____ The Great Depression
_____ Roe v. Wade
_____ Department of Government Efficiency
_____ Brown v. The Board of Education
_____ Emancipation Proclamation
_____ The sterilization of the NEA
_____ "under God" added to Pledge of Allegiance



Meaning Maker.org

American Citizenship Edition

Instructions:
Complete until correct. File for future reference.

Current President _____

War or Peace _____

Ruling Party _____

Date _____

This is Art.

ABOUT CITIZENSHIP *(defining the terrain)*

American Citizenship means:

- ❑ freedom is a right
- ❑ practicing tolerance
- ❑ the right to vote
- ❑ I must obey laws
- ❑ social responsibility
- ❑ free education
- ❑ social equality
- ❑ having a dream
- ❑ dreaming of money
- ❑ being a patriot
- ❑ religious freedom
- ❑ paying taxes
- ❑ social welfare
- ❑ biting one's tongue
- ❑ the government is always right
- ❑ the right to bear arms
- ❑ getting social security, maybe
- ❑ access to health care
- ❑ opportunities for prosperity
- ❑ the right to question
- ❑ my rights are protected
- ❑ personal accountability
- ❑ service to the country
- ❑ immense pride
- ❑ conspicuous consumption
- ❑ international embarrassment
- ❑ life, liberty & the pursuit of happiness

My citizenship status:

- ❑ I am naturalized
- ❑ I am visiting
- ❑ is being challenged
- ❑ was a privilege of birth
- ❑ I was born in the U.S.A.
- ❑ I am here illegally
- ❑ I married a U.S. citizen
- ❑ I wish I were a citizen
- ❑ I am here on political asylum
- ❑ I am here to study
- ❑ I am here for business
- ❑ I received amnesty
- ❑ I have dual citizenship

SYSTEM COMPREHENSION *(astuteness, awareness, savvy)*

I understand:

- ❑ The Bill of Rights
- ❑ The Monroe Doctrine
- ❑ The Capitalist Creed
- ❑ Project 2025–2026
- ❑ my Constitutional Rights
- ❑ responsibilities of citizenship
- ❑ The Ten Commandments
- ❑ The Posse Comitatus Act
- ❑ the separation of church and state
- ❑ The Declaration of Independence

I can explain:

- ❑ the rule of law
- ❑ due process
- ❑ how laws are made
- ❑ originalism
- ❑ the electoral vote
- ❑ habeas corpus
- ❑ martial law
- ❑ where my tax dollars go
- ❑ innocent until proven guilty
- ❑ three branches of government
- ❑ how the House and the Senate work together

I can recite:

- ❑ my Miranda rights
- ❑ The Pledge of Allegiance
- ❑ The 10 Freedom amendments in The Bill of Rights
- ❑ my state's animal, bird and flower
- ❑ the names of all of the presidents in order

I know:

- ❑ and can sing our national anthem
- ❑ and can identify all fifty states on a blank map
- ❑ the year of the first American presidency
- ❑ the shape of the pentagon
- ❑ what they do at the pentagon
- ❑ the difference between the Patriot Act and Patriot missiles
- ❑ where the president and vice president live
- ❑ who America has sold Weapons of Mass Destruction to
- ❑ the president's and vice president's salaries
- ❑ who America's coalition partners, allies and enemies are
- ❑ the meaning behind the flag's stars and stripes
- ❑ who lived here before Europeans arrived
- ❑ the elected democracies America has overthrown
- ❑ the current issues America is facing
- ❑ who the donkeys and elephants are

I believe:

- ❑ Manifest Destiny was justified
- ❑ the private lives of politicians are of public concern
- ❑ military service is everyone's responsibility
- ❑ America is the greatest nation in the world
- ❑ America is a Christian nation
- ❑ America should apologize for Indigenous genocide
- ❑ America should apologize for slavery
- ❑ democracy is worth fighting for
- ❑ the natives welcomed the immigrants on the Mayflower
- ❑ my child can grow up to be president
- ❑ Americans deserve their privilege

I understand the platforms of these political parties:

- ❑ Republican
- ❑ Green
- ❑ Labor
- ❑ Constitution
- ❑ Prohibition
- ❑ No Labels
- ❑ Reform
- ❑ Workers
- ❑ Nazi
- ❑ Unity
- ❑ Democratic
- ❑ Socialist
- ❑ Common Sense
- ❑ Communist
- ❑ Citizens
- ❑ Forward
- ❑ Marijuana
- ❑ Pirate
- ❑ Family Values
- ❑ Mandalorians
- ❑ Libertarian
- ❑ Peace & Freedom
- ❑ Freedom Socialist
- ❑ American Freedom
- ❑ Natural Law
- ❑ Prohibition
- ❑ Working Families
- ❑ Transhumanist
- ❑ People's
- ❑ Other _____

The purpose of presidential speeches is:

- ❑ tradition
- ❑ to distract
- ❑ self-aggrandizement
- ❑ celebrity development
- ❑ to disseminate sound bites for the media
- ❑ to comfort
- ❑ to communicate
- ❑ manipulation of the masses
- ❑ to persuade the constituency
- ❑ damage control
- ❑ a job requirement

What do the following acronyms stand for:

NASA	USDA	NEA	FEMA	WIC	NAACP
ERA	NRA	NPR	KPC	WMD	FAA
NSA	PNAC	ACLU	ESP	DHS	OMG
FBI	CDC	NAFTA	WHO	WTO	NATO
MOAB	GOP	ADA	BLM	FDA	SCOTUS
DOGE	MIA	KIA	POW	OPEC	POTUS
EPA	CIA	ICE	IRS	STD	FUBAR
DOJ	AWOL	INS	CPAC	DARPA	2SLGBTQIA+

MY CONCERNS *(rate the issues)*

Degree of concern:

1 = very important 5 = not important

___ immigration	___ corruption	___ climate change
___ abortion	___ ignorance	___ corporate welfare
___ health care	___ lobbyists	___ election fraud
___ FEMA	___ cronyism	___ power mongering
___ medicare	___ social security	___ affirmative action
___ welfare	___ misogyny	___ predicition markets
___ war on drugs	___ diversity	___ ICE enforcement
___ right to die	___ illegal wars	___ off shore drilling
___ gay rights	___ death penalty	___ truth in reporting
___ vaccines	___ free speech	___ marriage laws
___ privacy	___ tariffs	___ gender equality
___ unions	___ tax policies	___ national debt
___ education	___ housing	___ human trafficking
___ the draft	___ due process	___ police brutality
___ literacy	___ pornography	___ bipartisanship
___ Title IX	___ racism	___ discrimination
___ jobs	___ patriarchy	___ misinformation
___ terrorism	___ arts funding	___ endangered species
___ AI	___ human rights	___ crypto currency
___ truth/science	___ animal rights	___ executive orders
___ trans rights	___ reparations	___ denaturalization
___ redistricting	___ civil liberties	___ election deniers
___ authoritarianism		___ government surveillance
___ media consolidation		___ separation of church & state
___ political retaliation		___ military industrial complex
___ historical whitewashing		___ prison industrial complex
___ campaign financing		___ agricultural assistance
___ nuclear proliferation		___ colonialism/imperialism
___ white nationalism		___ preservation of nature
___ prescription drug prices		___ right to play the accordion
___ every child left behind		___ environmental degradation
___ disaster preparedness		___ faith based initiatives
___ voter registration laws		___ preserving the monarchy
___ American superiority		___ social media influencers

POLITICAL ACTUALIZATION *(citizen action)*

Things I do:

- ❑ attend meetings
- ❑ use persuasion
- ❑ fund initiatives
- ❑ vote regularly
- ❑ vandalize Teslas
- ❑ participate in boycotts
- ❑ make art about issues
- ❑ encourage discussions
- ❑ make bumper stickers
- ❑ complain, complain . . .
- ❑ distribute information
- ❑ volunteer time or expertise
- ❑ write congress
- ❑ community service
- ❑ try to set an example
- ❑ post on social media
- ❑ keep current on issues
- ❑ attend marches & rallies
- ❑ listen to the opposition
- ❑ other_____

The Hope of America

For 250 years America has been not just a country; it has been an embodied concept: a beacon of hope and a source of pride. The first European explorers were hoping for many things, including natural resources to extract into wealth. Since then, multitudes from across the planet have come here hoping for a better life for themselves and their families, whether they were escaping prosecution or poverty, or seeking opportunities and adventure, there was hope of something better and beyond.

With their hope, immigrants often bring their hard work and industry, which over time, alongside captive slave labor and genocide, built America into a prosperous, respected and feared world power. A power that on the surface stands for Freedom and Progress, housed under the banner of Democracy, America's founding principal.

Democracy is a lofty concept with varied outcomes. First noted in Greek history, the idea does not stand alone in these ancient origins. Many Indigenous peoples of the world based their societies on democratic practices. The Founding Fathers who wrote the American Constitution were known to be highly influenced by the Iroquois Confederacy and an established association of Native governments which included the Mohawk, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Oneida, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora. This is significant because at the time of the founding of America there was no European model of democratic society. Europeans immigrated to America to escape a range of insults suffered under various monarchies and to achieve a range of freedoms which included choice of religious practice; free speech; freedom to congregate; freedom to pursue life, liberty and happiness, i.e. The American Dream.

Today people continue to seek the freedoms and opportunities that the concept of America stands for. People still want to dream big and positively for themselves and their families. Citizens of the world still try to come here for a better life than that which their countries of origin can provide for them. People come. They bring their beliefs and traditions with them. They hope these will be respected. They expect their lives and labor to be received with the basics of a democratic system. Many new immigrants reciprocate by educating themselves on the history of this land and its people with desire to understand America in context, and to engage respectfully in the democratic process of being an American, pursuing the dream.

Hope drives and sustains our species. It motivates us to move, to continue, to persevere through challenging times. Hoping for agency and opportunity in one's own life might seem like such a simple thing, but it is something that is not a given, even today, 250 years into the American democratic experiment. It is something that many in the world will not achieve in our lifetimes unless humankind is able to rise to the actualization of a just society for all.

Who is America today? What are our hopes for the futures of our children? Is America still capable of fulfilling the dream? What might we do to activate our hopes into reality?

We are fortunate that creatives of all walks ponder, research, process, and through their creative practice, communicate with us about these questions. Artists provide us with insights and perspectives beyond our own individual experiences, beyond our hopes, beyond our dreams, helping us to understand and expand the good of humanity for all.

Nanette Wylde
for the Center for Creativity

Lisa Bostwick

American Dream 2

The American flag belongs to all of us. My paintings express the hope that toxic polarization is eradicated when we focus on our oneness as Americans. With iterations of the flag in my ongoing series *Flag over Flag* and *American Dream* I aspire to communicate the importance of allowing variety and nuance in our views, breaking the idea that any one group has a monopoly on American identity.

With each iteration of color, texture, brushwork and composition, painting the flag becomes a metaphor for endless possibility and beauty. No one group owns America. In fact, in my *Flag over Flag* paintings I am addressing the idea that our country is constantly changing and emerging.

My work combats the polarization exacerbated by damaging algorithms on social media—by facing stressful division head-on with strong and creative messaging.

Everyone is tired of feeling that our citizens are readying for a kind of civil war! We are one country. This is why I paint the flag in red and then in blue for the *American Dream* works. Both are America! The idea that "in many there is one" can never be overstated. Our flag and symbolism such as the eagle remind us we can disagree but must always celebrate the USA as our collective home. Painting has always functioned on a conscious and subliminal level, and communicates in a way direct arguments cannot.

bostwickpaints.com

American Dream 2, Acrylic on wood, 30" x 40" x 1.5"

Catherine Sherman

Home of the Brave

Quilts serve as a testament that mending and transformation remain within our reach. By selecting materials that bridge color and pattern across disparate periods and locations, I aim to highlight individual expression within shared geometries. Utilizing repurposed textiles anchors my practice in the past while carrying lived experiences forward into our collective future.

The 2016 election cycle fundamentally altered my perception of art's capacity to unite us through shared acts of seeing and comprehension. I began tearing fabric into strips to process a profound grief for our fractured nation. Those remnants evolved into stripes, leading me to construct American flags from diverse palettes and patterns as a way to envision a more inclusive, connected tomorrow.

Home of the Brave presents a flag that celebrates the vibrant cultures of Latin America, set above an ocean where figures are glimpsed within the waves. This piece is a dedication to the resilience of immigrants, refugees, and those seeking asylum.

It is my hope that these works offer a space to confront our complicated histories through these artifacts and to summon our better angels.

piecemovement.com

Home of the Brave, Quilt, 54" x 55" x .5"

Ileana Soto

Fractured/Contained

I printed this design on election day, the first Tuesday of November, 2024, an anxious time. After the election's results, I needed to 'soothe my soul.' I did that by developing this piece further. The expanse of white space allowed me some breathing room. Even though my patterning imparts a degree of chaos and fracturing, I saw hope in the open spacing. I added diagonal lines. Their enclosures softened and contained the movement, slowed it down. If we practice containing ourselves inside and the chaos outside, aka, Resistance, we'll make it through this time. I believe this current period is helping us to recognize the cracks in our system and will give us the courage to make our country stronger. Hence, my title *Fractured/Contained*.

www.ileanasoto.com

Fractured/Contained, Textile art, 21" x 53.5"

Jay Rasin

Freedom 2024

The shifts in American culture evident prior to the 2024 November presidential election motivated me to address the threats to liberty and democracy—freedoms that I enjoyed for most of my adult life.

Freedom 2024 is my attempt to bring the viewer into the struggle for freedom. By incorporating characters of diverse backgrounds, as suggested by their hairstyles, I aimed to foster a sense of identification among a broad audience. Personal identification enables the viewer to perceive themselves as part of the scene, enhancing their engagement and emotional connection.

The multicolored stripes of each letter of FREEDOM suggest the ethnic and national diversity of the human race and specifically reference the LGBTQ community. I positioned the bold letters firmly in the middle of the piece to focus on the theme of inclusion. We are experiencing a shift to aggressive and vocal attacks on the LGBTQ community. I believe an attack on one segment of society lays the groundwork for an attack on others. Similarly, a defense of one group in our culture offers a shield of protection for all groups.

The storm clouds pushing upon FREEDOM represent the larger threats to liberty and democracy. And much like the unexpected results of destructive storms, the best outcome is often being connected to our neighbors to rebuild our facilities, revitalize our communities, and improve our culture.

The systems that support our comfort and standard of living rest fully on the institutions of democracy. Our individual freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution are under attack. It is the responsibility of citizens to defend those rights and to stand up for the rights of others. We can reconnect and rebuild our society.

Freedom 2024 is my attempt to motivate the viewer to value liberty and take action to protect freedom for all of us—before we surrender our rights.

@jrasin2

Freedom 2024, Multimedia, 11" x 14" x .5"

FREEDOM

Jayne Tucker

Peace, Love and Understanding

My sculptural work, *Peace, Love and Understanding,* is created from discarded tea bags—materials once steeped, now transformed. Through processes of emptying, layering, and shaping, I give new life to what is often overlooked, suggesting that renewal is always possible.

Three hands rise from the earth like trees, rooted in shared ground. Each hand embodies a guiding principle: peace, love, and, understanding. Together, they form a living sculpture—interdependent and essential—reminding us that none can stand fully alone. Their tree-like forms speak to growth, resilience and the quiet strength found in connection. A butterfly, poised for flight, symbolizes hope in motion, suggesting that hope is something that we can share.

This piece reflects my aspirations for our country and its people: that we might ground ourselves in compassion, extend empathy across differences, and nurture a collective vision rooted in care. The use of recycled tea bags reinforces this belief. What has been used, worn or discarded can be reshaped into something meaningful and beautiful.

Peace, Love and Understanding envisions what can be: a return to foundational human values, a willingness to transform, and the courage to grow together toward a more unified and hopeful future.

@teabagsandstring

Peace, Love and Understanding, Used tea bags, 15" x 19" x 19"

Laurie Barna

The Face of Liberty

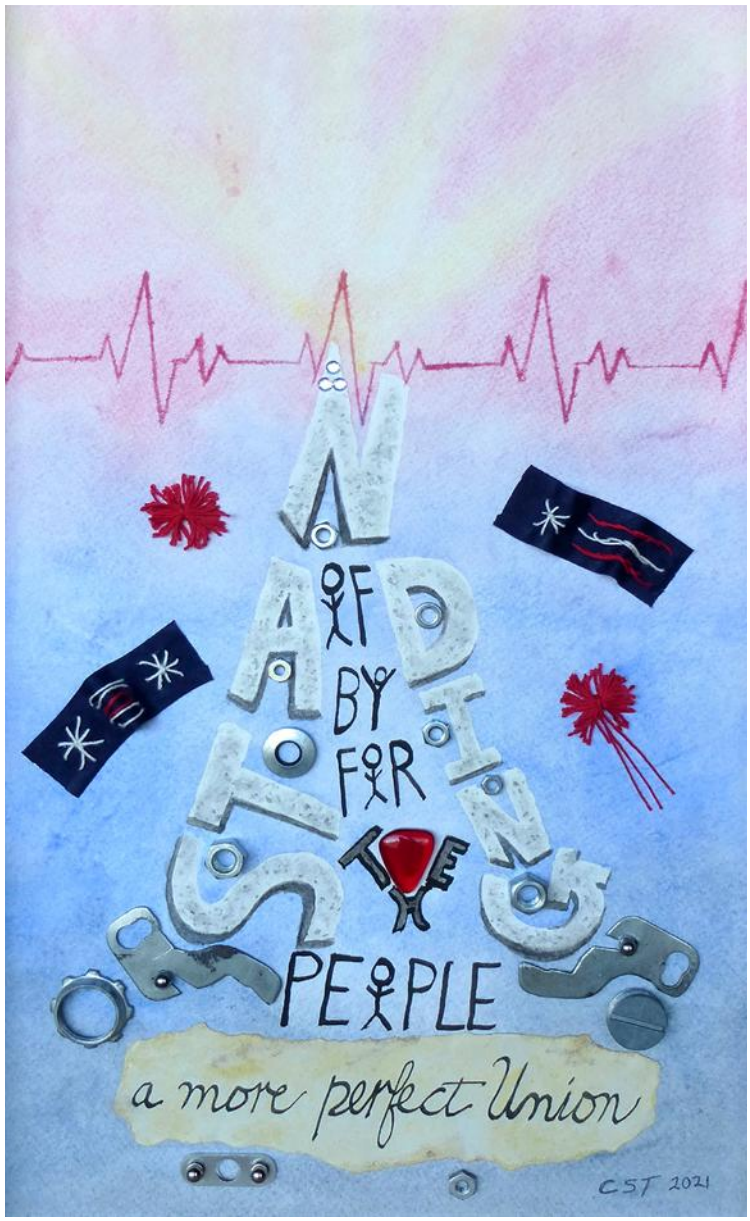
The Face of Liberty invites viewers to look beyond the familiar symbol of the Statue of Liberty and consider the deeper ideals she represents—hope, resilience, freedom, and unity. In this work, Liberty is not merely a monument of the past, but a living reflection of the American spirit and the shared dreams of its people, inspiring viewers to believe that the enduring ideals symbolized by Lady Liberty still have the power to unite, heal and guide our nation.

As part of my ongoing *Liberty Series,* it also speaks to the importance of remembering who we are and what we can become. Even in challenging times, Liberty's face remains steadfast, reminding us that hope for the future is found in courage, compassion, and the willingness to carry freedom forward to the next generation.

www.watercolorsmyway.com

The Face of Liberty, Torn Paper Collage, 21" x 21"

Connie Tettenborn



Our Republic

I was inspired to create *Our Republic* when Congress certified the election following the Jan 6 Capitol riot. I work in the visual poetry genre, which can be loosely defined as poetry meant to be seen. In these works, individual letters or words provide both form and meaning. I painted letters in the word STANDING as if they were made of granite forming a pyramid. Letters in OF, BY and FOR THE PEOPLE contain stick figures representing citizens. *a more perfect Union* written in ink on parchment signifies the founding of our nation. A heart and heartbeat trace along with rays of sunlight depict the hopefulness associated with maintaining our democracy.

poeticartnmathbyconnie.6te.net

Our Republic, Mixed Media, 18" x 11"

Patrick Sumner and Sheila Davies Sumner

Haiku News II

In general, my approach to art making originates somewhere between the discipline of personal psychological investigations, and purposeless play. This activity is rooted in a belief that you don't know ahead of time what the thing you're making is going to become, you have to make it to find out what it will be. For me art making is similar to dreaming, and as the Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz said, "dreams never tell us what we already know."

However, no matter what one's approach to art making is, it is my view that any form of creative, generative, and inclusive activity is a threat to autocratic power. Tyrants are afraid of art, anything they can't control makes them afraid, but as seen in Minneapolis, it also makes them dangerous. Be hopeful, be creative, be connected, and be prepared.

Patrick Sumner

Haiku News II, Archival digital print, 22" x 17"

MINNEAPOLIS MADE IT REAL

HAIKU NEWS

Alex Pretti
And Then They Came For Him

Alex means to "protect",
"defend". He believed in healing;
nursed battle-scarred Vets,

cherished nature — on
his feet and from his bike seat
and in the street, First

Amendment eyes. His
attentive witness, wise to
any ICE assault.

He did not run, no!
came to help a stranger, yes! Just
before he was killed.

Lends a helping hand
for a stranger shoved to ground.
His last spoken words,

"Are you okay?",
before he was dragged away,
tackled and pinned,

gripped by 6 ICE goons,
struggles to get free, shot ten
times in five seconds.

"He showed composure,
his signature calm, strength, just
before he was killed."

"I saw him wrestled
down, I saw his feet go limp,
and then my heart sank."

Bullets pierce your spine.
You breathe fire in your heart.
Crime splinters his bones.

About those bullets:
his stories ended today.
Birds, earthbound, won't fly.

Many viewers saw
murder, not a "domestic
terrorist" to fear.

The moon wakens night,
sighting an execution,
the rose breaks its stalk.

Please Get the Truth Out About Our Son

"He loved his country.
He cared for people deeply.
He was a good man."

And the Poets Sing:
Our Immigration Touchstone is a True Poem

. . . "give me your tired,
your poor, your huddled masses
yearning to breathe free.

Send these, the homeless,
tempest-tost to me. I lift
my lamp beside the

golden door!" – "The New
Colossus", by the author,
Emma Lazarus.

One of the most quoted
sonnets on our planet earth.
For the Statue of Liberty in 1883

Minneapolis
means "friend"
in *Dakota* tongue.

Twin of St. Paul shares
the upper Mississippi
"River of the Falls."

A Plague of Ice

ICE invades a great,
civic minded people. Hit
in winter? Wrong! We

grew up on ice skates,
skis, sleds. Not easy targets.
We thrive in winter.

Despite the cold, crowds flood
streets. They misjudged our people.
Cool-heads heartiness.

We watched and studied.
ICE surged other big cities.
And we were ready.

Care teams, legal schemes,
trained citizen observers
watch outside detention hubs,

town squares, urban parks.
Local cooks feed who's needy.
Food banks overflow.

'Facts are Stubborn Things'
— John Adams

The judge was angry:
"Release — *in Minnesota!* —
this immigrant, now!"

"Return his papers.
Dumped in Texas? *Not* St. Paul?
Fetch his property."

"The 'worst criminals'?
Most don't fit that description
Crackdown is bogus!"

"No forced detentions.
Violates Act of Congress.
Writ is nationwide." (Sykes)

A Two-Bit Strongman

It's in the mere name:
some only get to triumph
via corruption.

Name means, "act the fool",
blow the trumpet, break wind, cheat –
sleight-of-evil rule.

Mni Sóta Makoce
"Where waters reflect the sky"
Star of the North shines.

Minnesota Responds:
Something's Happening Here And it's Clear

Hostile arrival:
Icefall of blood red loss, thieves
of Names, Hearts, and Minds

Unmasked:
The Face of the Fight

The tide turns: people
of America revolt.
Abundant waters.

A fierce show of force,
going to the streets unarmed.
Defend our neighbors,

from masked gunmen, who
break our Constitution's rights.
Banyan tree – new growth.

Keep moving. Waves
of humanity melt the
hoar debris of ICE,

when silence is loud! —
economic consequence
thumps fascistic choice.

The tide turns: judges,
grand juries, courts, protesters
No Kings, nationwide —

alive and alert.
To everything, bear witness.
Vote "to vow" sea change.

Everyone's watching
arms folded, none of us move.
ICE writhes. Clear message:

Minnesotans say:
Leave our state, cowards of ICE
"You're not welcome here."

This Torn Supreme Court

Grant immunity?
It takes a ruling to raise
a lawless tyrant.

Renée Good
And Then They Came For Her

Her name means *reborn.*
Her pride of lions look.
Her phoenix beauty.

Drops her young son
at school. Encounters harsh ICE,
with kind smiles, sweet

cheery talking: "That's
fine, dude, I'm not mad at you. . ."
Her l a s t words. ICE growls:

Shouts: "Drive!" *Roars*: "Get out!"
Turns her wheel away from ICE.
But I c e m a n cometh,

drew his gun, leaned forth,
fired three cruel shots in one
second. All strike her.

Her sky-washed eyes
stop seeing, start closing. NO!
ICE stops doctor's help.

About those bullets:
her stories ended today.
Birds, earthbound, won't fly.

A mother of three
and a prize-winning poet.
"She was quick to love."

"On Learning to Disect Fetal Pigs"
– lines from Renée Good's poem

i want back my rocking chairs,
solipsist sunsets,
& coastal jungle sounds that are tercets
from cicadas and pentameter
"make room for wonder" –
brook of my soul.

"I'm Trying To Overcome"

A desolation
of kids detained, "they're treated
as prisoners – monstrous."

The Dilley Center,
in Texas: five-year-old twins
locked there for eight months.

"I am 5 years old.
They say kids here, they withdraw.
I just want to draw".

"I listen to kids
crying, crying, all the time"
Sadness beyond words.

Liam, caught near home –
wearing a school backpack
and blue bunny hat.

He got depressed, slept
a lot. He liked his school friends
saving his desk seat.

"Sometimes ICE takes friends.
Sometimes people shoot others
trying to stop ICE."

"Feels like it's not nice.
I'm trying to overcome, but
getting sad and scared."
– 8-year-old child, Valley View School, MN.

Minneapolis Made It Real reports on what's been happening inside our country and throughout the state of the union. The stories in *Haiku News*, so often of tragedy, are being met with hardiness and tenacity, and a lot of homegrown bravery and creative resistance.

Americans are matter-of-factly coming to grips with a forbidding reality many of us have not experienced in our lifetimes. Yet this reality can also generate hope:

> Hope is the thing with feathers
> That perches in the soul
>
> ~ Emily Dickinson

Haiku is known for its brevity and clarity, composed in 17 syllables over three short lines. In *Haiku News*, this Japanese art-form, with its traditional focus on a singular moment or event, has been expanded into sequences of 14 news reports.

On the page, displaying their airy use of empty space, the Haiku stanzas can sometimes seem to float within and between lines and in a surround of clear, space-laced margins and columns. And, like music, these 5-7-5 poems have their own kind of intervals, offering "rest stops", for absorbing difficult facts, with time to de-stress and and take a breath. The structural arrangement and brevity of Haiku are strangely able to counterbalance the intolerable facts. In this way, the form of Haiku offers a lesson in how to live through these punishing times—when hope feels like it's losing out to the darkness.

Light is not only at the liberational end of the tunnel but also inside of it. As we navigate the loss that so many are feeling, this steady light, generated through energetic struggle, grows closer.

The inserts pictured here—*And the Poets Sing & A Plague of Ice*—merge facts with actions. They offer ways to "metabolize" hope: one, by means of collective/neighborhood solidarity; and two, through the "little song" of the sonnet, which is found at the heart of poetry. *Haiku News* is dedicated to the American people who will continue to "lift the lamp," as they lighten and brighten these dark days.

Sheila Davies Sumner

details *Haiku News II*, Archival digital print, 22" x 17"

A Plague of Ice

ICE invades a great,
civic minded people. Hit
in winter? Wrong! We

grew up on ice skates,
skis, sleds. Not easy targets.
We thrive in winter.

Despite the cold, crowds flood
streets. They misjudged our people.
Cool-heads heartiness.

We watched and studied.
ICE surged other big cities.
And we were ready.

Care teams, legal schemes,
trained citizen observers
watch outside detention hubs,

town squares, urban parks.
Local cooks feed who's needy.
Food banks overflow.

And the Poets Sing: Our Immigration Touchstone is a True Poem

. . . "give me your tired,
your poor, your huddled masses
yearning to breathe free.

Send these, the homeless,
tempest-tost to me. I lift
my lamp beside the

golden door!" – "The New
Colossus", by the author,
Emma Lazarus.

One of the most quoted
sonnets on our planet earth.
For the Statue of Liberty in 1883

Nanette Wylde

Milagros for Times Like These

Milagros for Times Like These acts as a prayer for a better future: Across cultures and time humans have made offerings to their spirit worlds. These "prayers" take many forms: altars, candles, charms, incantations, performative acts, sacrifices. They are requests for healing, protection and forgiveness; and embody hopes of connection to the miracles of sacred forces beyond the everyday. Incantations and charms are offered to ancient sources of wisdom, seeking transformation—restoration and healing—from the effects of current destructive human practices.

preneo.org/nwylde

Milagros for Times Like These, Monoprint: lithography and serigraphy, 30" x 22"

Katherine Zodrow

Through this work, I offer my view of the world. It is a world where friends on the playground don't all look the same. A world where strong young girls of all backgrounds are free to be loud, take risks, and build friendships. These girls are skaters—they go fast, jump high, and have fun. But the figures are not only an homage to the sport; they symbolize joy, friendship, diversity, and a celebration of life. These characters are reflections of my friends and family. Their poses are inspired by my lived experience.

Thumbs Up

A child skates confidently in front of me, deftly navigating through sticks, leaves, and cracks in the sidewalk. The urban concrete is her jungle. Flat, unblemished surfaces are boring. She miscalculates and ends up on the ground, legs askew. She turns to me, gives me a giant smile and a thumbs up. After a second, she's back on her feet, skating into the distance once more.

Flying

Although I am an adult and should therefore be beyond such frivolity, I love roller skating. Under the guise of a supervising parent, I accompany my daughter to the skate rink. But truthfully, I want to be there as much as she does. As we skate, that song comes on. You know it. It's the one that makes you want to roll down your windows, turn up the radio, and sing yourself hoarse. That song that makes you dance like a maniac or turn your desk into a drum set. At the rink, my song comes on, and I find myself crouching low, flying under the air, flying in a way that you can only do on the smooth, polished wood of a roller rink.

Howl

Life is good. I'm with my friends, and we are laughing so hard tears have started to leak out of our eyes. The worries melt away, we are just right here, right now, and that is everything. The eyes that watch us, judge us, tell us "no," are not here. Not in our place. Not when we are together.

www.katherinezodrow.art

Thumbs Up, Stoneware and underglaze, 5" x 7" x 4"
Opposite page top: *Flying*, Stoneware and underglaze, 6" x 8" x 5"
Oppositie page bottom: *Howl*, Stonewear and underglaze, 7" x 6" x 5"

Anne Lamborn

Everyone Belongs

This work was made on behalf of the Town of Los Gatos DEI Commission for the July 4, 2025 Town Celebration. The DEI Commission chose the words and the colors. I worked with hand dyed indigo fabric on hand, so was able to make the banner quickly. Obviously, we fall short all the time but, really, everyone in the world belongs. We must strive to make belonging a reality in every way. The fact that this piece even exists as a result of town government is a real affirmation of democracy and my feelings about being an American.

This is an inter-active community piece and will continue to be used again and again.

annelamborn.com

Everyone Belongs, Art Quilt with hand dyed Shibori, 54" x 96"

Samuray Akarvardar

Homecoming 2

The concept of democracy originated in ancient Athens, Greece, around the 5th century B.C.E., and the term itself means "rule by the people" in Ancient Greek. As a Turkish-born citizen of this country, my childhood memories are shaped by family trips to the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts of Turkey, where I encountered the ruins of Greek, Roman, and various Anatolian civilizations. It was only after moving here that I became more fully aware of this historically and geographically rich inheritance. As an abstract figurative painter, I am especially drawn to the Greek figurative tradition, where the human form stands as the origin and enduring foundation of artistic expression.

samakarvardar.com

Homecoming 2, Mixed media, 16" x 12"

Sandra Tamkin

breathe free

breathe free reclaims the female body as central to the broader conversation about rights, calling attention to reproductive freedom and bodily autonomy. By combining patriotic imagery with feminist symbolism, the work asks us to reconsider what freedom truly means today—and challenges us to ensure it is lived, not merely promised.

The title, *breathe free,* directly reclaims language from *The New Colossus*, the poem inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty: *Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free*. By weaving this historic promise into a work focused on reproductive rights, the piece confronts the tension between America's ideals of sanctuary and liberty and the contemporary struggle for bodily autonomy.

tudordrive.com

breathe free, Acrylic and ink on paper, 17" x 8"

Breathe
Free

Democracy Sounds Different

Music in authoritarian societies tends toward sentimental grandiosity blared at people from a single point source—think of the loudspeakers in North Korea, the massed choirs and martial anthems pouring from a fixed center outward, demanding that everyone within earshot feel the same thing at the same volume. There is no conversation in such music, only proclamation. The listener is an empty container to be filled, not a voice to be heard.

Democracy sounds different. At its best, it's something closer to jazz: multiple voices in genuine conversation, weaving distinct threads into a larger whole that lifts every voice into something none could reach alone—and at its highest, perhaps even a symphony. Democracy asks its participants to cultivate what we might call a symphonic mind: not only the capacity to hear and appreciate the full pattern and texture of our national conversation, but the willingness to offer the full symphony already inside ourselves as our own contribution. Our national conversation is the true music of democracy—and it falls silent the moment we stop listening for one another, or stop singing our own true part.

Paul Andrews
Citizen Joy Leader

Lexi Negin

This is America

The power to know YES is at the heart of how I see, feel, and create through photography. My images reflect my personal pursuit of a life of freedom and joy, even in the face of the horrid events dividing our country. This image of two men on the ferry from Vallejo to San Francisco was a fleeting moment that represents My America where everyone belongs and is free from oppression.

This is America, Photography inkjet print, 12" x 18" x 1"

PreNeo Press

It Begins With You

It Begins with You is an activist/intervention of freely distributed peace buttons which takes place in public spaces and as gallery installations. The project began in 2003 as we were marching against the American war in Iraq. More than 8,000 buttons have been made in our studio and publically distributed.

The peace button symbol was created by the British graphic designer, Gerald Holtom, in 1958. It is based on the semaphore flags of N and D, and stands for Nuclear Disarmament. It developed popular culture attention in the 1960's when it became associated with the hippie generation and opposition to the Vietnam War. Today it continues to act as a generic symbol representing peace. The variety of colors we use represents diversity of identity and ways of being, while continuing to send the message of desire for a peaceful planet. The words "It Begins With You" on the peace button bowl's pedestal reminds the audience that they have a part in helping peace to be a reality.

PreNeo Press (Kent Manske & Nanette Wylde) is a conceptual space which engages in collaboration and social practice community building by creating projects, publications, and opportunities which celebrate the Art Life. PreNeo projects include the creation of artist residencies, interviews with West Coast creatives, a wide range of publishing projects and conceptual interventions, including *Meaning Maker*, political tracts, and candy colored peace buttons.

preneo.org

It Begins With You, Social practice in the form of wearable candy colored peace buttons, 1" x 1" each

About Citizen Joy

Citizen Joy is a celebration of democracy focused on gratitude, agency and harmony.

We are a national network of artists and arts organizations from all disciplines using art to cut through the doom and gloom about politics, explore what we have (and could lose) as citizens, and energize people to do what they can to protect our democratic rights and freedoms.

Our mission is to bring the power of the arts to growing meaningful citizen engagement.

Because we know that autocrats thrive when there is a disheartened, disconnected and divided populace, we need to engage as citizens to defend the best of what democracy is and can be. And we need to understand and love what we're defending. Artists can help because artists know how to deal with the gnarliest of subjects in a way that energizes people.

We try to be a spark and an inspiration for people across the country to do whatever they are inspired to do, where they are, with the friends and resources they have.

We initiate group projects focusing on particular themes. We provide opportunities for artists to share projects, receive feedback and support, and connect with others for possible future projects. We post contributions from our network on the blog *Our Voices* as well as on our FB and Instagram pages, and Youtube channel.

Our network includes individual creators, educators and organizations in all artistic disciplines—visual arts, performing arts, music, film, writing, design, media and more. We are an all-volunteer effort, and grow through relationships and word-of-mouth.

A small leadership team meets weekly on Zoom to develop ideas and to help guide and coordinate the diverse and decentralized efforts of our network of artists, arts organizations and educators. A newsletter gets sent out every month announcing the next Zoom meeting's theme, and our monthly zoom conversations enable people who have joined our network to share their artistic projects and discuss ideas together.

citizenjoy.org
www.youtube.com/@citizenjoy

Prepared by MagCloud for Barbara Kibbe. Get more at kibbe.magcloud.com.